The Rumanian Pot Boils Over *by Alter Brody*

FIFTEEN CENTS

September 17, 1940

NEW MASSES

FDR's Coup d'Etat

From President to Dictator?

AN EDITORIAL

This Is Stalin

by A. B. Magil

Rich Land, Poor Farmers

by Anna Rochester

F. J. Wallace reviews Stuart Chase's new book

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Between Ourselves

IF YOU had happened to be in the vicinity of Woodbourne, N. Y., late last Sunday night you might have witnessed a grand retreat. A corps of one hundred and a half NM readers and staff members was regretfully returning to the city from the most successful party NM has ever conducted. Which is another way of informing you who were not present that the weekend at Chesters' Zunbarg exceeded everyone's expectations. The weather gods were unusually kind, the food good enough to delight the most finicky gourmet, the entertainment brilliant. Not the least of the features was Joe North's fascinating report of his recent tour of Mexico and Cuba. James Dugan contributed another bright hour with his talk on the virtues, vices, ins, and outs of swing. It was a memorable two days, and many are already plotting a return to the mountaintop, in which they are receiving the hearty encouragement of the business office. The bookkeeping department reports, to the delight of everyone, a juicy dividend on the venture.

Joe North was able to spend some time at the NM weekend because of the brief postponement of his coming tour of the country. It had been NM's plan to assign North to the two-week West Coast campaign trip of Earl Browder. Mr. Browder's tour was annulled by edict of Federal Judge Knox, who forbade him to leave New York, an act upon which we comment elsewhere in this issue. As a result Joe will not leave for several days. However, the scope of his series of articles will not be affected by the delay. He will report and analyze not only the cross-currents of the political campaign but the shifting sands of American life at this critical moment.

September 30, we remind you, is the date on which NM's yearly subscription rates will rise from $4.50 to $5, and for the half-yearly subscription from $2.50 to $2.75. The increase in the cost of paper accounts for the new rates. If you subscribe at the old rates on or before September 30, you may choose a book as a premium from the list printed on the back cover.

October will be marked by an important NM event, a memorial meeting in honor of John Reed. NM will sponsor this tribute to its most famous contributor and editor, the great journalist whose articles against the last war more than twenty years ago made the old *Masses* an outstanding publication. October 20 marks the twentieth anniversary of his death in Moscow, where he had been reporting the Russian Revolution. Among NM's present readers and contributors are many who knew him. They will all be part of NM's memorial meeting. Further details will be announced in an early issue.

Several of NM's contributors are listed as speakers at the seminar on the Soviet Union to be held at Arcadia Farms, Hopewell Junction, N. Y., in the foothills of the Berkshires on September 27-29 under auspices of the American Committee for Friendship with the Soviet Union. Corliss Lamont, Isidor Schneider, Gen. Victor A. Yakhontoff, and many others will discuss the Soviet economic system, government, constitution, philosophy, science, trade unions, literature, and art, as well as the international relations of the USSR.

We know that many readers will be inquiring why Ruth McKenney's column, "Strictly Personal," is absent from this issue. Ruth is ill but she hopes to be back again next week.

Some time ago we asked NM readers to appoint themselves reporters on the state of affairs in their part of the country. And now we are in possession of a large number of letters which we hope to print in a forthcoming issue. One of our reader correspondents was in the Senate gallery when the vote was taken on the Burke-Wadsworth conscription bill. He says: "There was an air of anti-climax in the roll call. One sensed that the Republican opposition was largely for the record, that insofar as the Senate was concerned, the real decisions had been made in Hyde Park and Wall Street weeks in advance. . . . I had an opportunity to sample public opinion in Washington on the draft. Young men of military age were predominantly opposed. There is the utmost confusion as to what our potential army of four million is to defend. . . . The central problem of the peace movement is apparent: it is to give the American people faith in themselves. To do this is not as easy as it may sound, for powerful forces are at work to destroy their faith, to convince them that dictatorship alone can provide adequate national defense. And yet, as John L. Lewis declared on Labor Day, 'an army of four million people cannot save our nation if the people doubt that it is worth saving.' The entire recent history of France bears witness that democracy can only be defended through a democratic program administered by the people's leaders. The worst enemies of American democracy are those who would scuttle it, to prevent it from falling into the hands of a foreign enemy."

Then from Muskegon, in Michigan, comes a letter fro[illegible] "You asked for comment, b[illegible]ead-ing 'On Defending [illegible]d 'Spanish Lesson' in yo[illegible] issue, who can say more[illegible], here goes: Yesterday a mi[illegible]ame in to see me and asked: 'Who are we going to vote for?' I replied: 'Here is a positively rotten hen's egg and here's a positively rotten duck egg. Which one, Reverend, do you wish to eat?' I am for a third party, for what availeth all our preelection wailing and gnashing of teeth, prayer and wishes, when either of the big parties will hang us higher than Haman after election day. That peace mobilization in Chicago, even if it was not able to create a new political party there and then, contains the seed for the future. It must be tended, watered, made to sprout into a great tree which will shelter all of us who believe in old-fashioned America and not the fake democracy under brass hats which is being prepared for us."

Who's Who

ALTER BRODY, the author of several books, has written frequently for NM on European affairs. . . . Anna Rochester is a noted American economist, author of *Rulers of America* and the recently published *Why Farmers Are Poor.* . . . Alexander F. Bergman is a young New York poet who has contributed poems to NM before. . . . Paula Andrews is for obvious reasons the nom de plume of a member of the staff of the New York WPA Writers Project. . . . Frank J. Wallace is an economist and writer. . . . Milton Meltzer is well known to NM readers as the author of numerous articles and book reviews. . . . Samuel Becker is a labor journalist. . . . Gale Thorne is a research worker in the field of American history. . . . Raphael Hayes has had several poems published in NM.

Flashbacks

IF Mr. Roosevelt wants a glimpse into his future he might consider what happened Sept. 13, 1919, to his predecessor in betrayal, Woodrow Wilson. That day thousands of IWW's poured into Seattle from all over the Northwest to meet the President. Police terror was unable to prevent them from lining both sides of the street for five blocks along Wilson's line of march where they presented a sea of unsmiling faces and an ocean of hatbands labeled "Release Political Prisoners." . . . Sept. 12, 1918, marks the anniversary of the conviction of Eugene V. Debs. "I am accused of having obstructed the war," he said to the court. "I admit it. Gentlemen, I abhor war."

This Week

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NEW MASSES

VOLUME XXXVI SEPTEMBER 17, 1940 NUMBER 13

FDR's Coup d'Etat

AN EDITORIAL

SEVENTY-SEVEN years ago Abraham Lincoln called the American people to grim battle that "government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth." Today government of the people, by the people, and for the people in these United States is a mockery. On September 3 President Roosevelt virtually proclaimed a new principle: the principle of the unlimited powers of the executive branch of the government. This principle is in flat contempt of the Constitution. It is a principle of usurpation and dictatorship.

Think fast, America. Fascism does not necessarily come with advance fanfare and clear avowal of aim. Fascism can move on cat feet. It can overwhelm the people's freedom by stages and degrees—by "measures short of war" that circumvent peace, by constitutional trickery and legalistic deception, by spurious "passport" trials, by denials of ballot rights to minority parties, by gagging a minority presidential candidate whose program of peace is the program of the majority, by placing big business in the seats of government, by "anti-trust" persecution of labor unions, and by that sure quencher of human liberty, conscription. The road to fascism in Germany, Italy, Spain, France was paved with similar measures.

The turning over of fifty American destroyers to Britain in exchange for ninety-nine year leases for eight sea and air bases is an unmistakable act of war. It comes only shortly after another act of war, the setting up of a joint defense board with a belligerent country, Canada. These are military alliances in everything but name. Even the *Wall Street Journal* describes the destroyers-bases deal as "the nearest possible thing to a treaty of alliance between the two powers." The arrangements for both these acts of war were *secret*. Behind the backs of the people, without consulting Congress, without even the formality of securing ratification by two-thirds of the Senate as the Constitution stipulates, President Roosevelt negotiated virtual treaties of alliance with warring powers. In the context of growing aggression against civil liberties and peace these acts of the President loom as major pillars of a rapidly rising structure of military dictatorship. Another such pillar is the Burke-Wadsworth conscription bill which, as we go to press, is in conference after having passed the Senate and House.

Consider the trickery used to put over the presidential coup d'etat of September 3. Early in June the administration began negotiations with the British government for the sale of so-called "mosquito boats" which were then under construction for the US Navy. On June 19 Stephen Early, White House secretary, told the press that these negotiations involved "no question of sale of destroyers, submarines, cruisers, or any other types" than the "mosquito boats." A storm of protest in Congress and rising anti-war sentiment in the country caused the administration to abandon plans for turning over these ships, Attorney General Jackson furnishing an opinion that the transfer was illegal. On June 24 Secretary of the Navy Edison, on retiring from office, told his press conference that "we are keeping all our combatant vessels."

Having thus through the mouths of his secretary and his secretary of the navy allayed public fears about any sale of American warships to Britain, the President then set about making plans for getting around the law, the Constitution, and the American people. A great campaign was launched in the press and on the radio in favor of selling fifty "over-age" destroyers. General Pershing and other stalking horses were trotted out to ride down opposition. At the same time the President announced that negotiations had started for leasing naval and air bases. But in order to throw the public off the scent, Roosevelt on August 16 specifically denied that there was any connection between the proposed leasing of the bases and the possible transfer of destroyers. A little over two weeks later he presented the country with a *fait accompli* dressed up with a cut-to-fit opinion by his attorney general (who is completely impartial, of course, since he was appointed by the President himself), subjecting the law and the Constitution to such tortures as have rarely been visited upon them.

The fifty destroyers constitute one-fourth of all American destroyers and one-half of the total Atlantic fleet. If Jackson's interpretation of the act of June 15, 1917, which clearly bars the transfer of warships to belligerents, is allowed to stand, there is nothing to prevent the administration from turning over the entire American fleet to Britain without bothering to tell Congress until after the fact!

"There may be other similar negotiations," President Roosevelt stated. In other words, more secret deals. Secretary of the Navy Knox told newspapermen that the United States is negotiating for bases in the Pacific on the Cocos and Galapagos islands, owned respectively by

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Costa Rica and Ecuador. Roosevelt promptly denied that such negotiations were in progress. This is the way the administration plays ducks and drakes with the American people.

What does the destroyers-bases deal mean as far as the peace of America is concerned? On Sept. 3, 1939, President Roosevelt told the country over the radio that "this nation will remain a neutral nation." He declared: "As long as it remains within my power to prevent it, there will be no blackout of peace in the United States." On Sept. 21, 1939, in a message to Congress urging the lifting of the arms embargo, the President said: "Our acts must be guided by one single hard-headed thought —keeping America out of this war." Who today, recalling these words, cannot help realize that the President of the United States has shamelessly betrayed his solemn pledge to the American people? Today the very words "neutrality" and "peace" have become obsolete in Washington. And "within the family" the truth is coming out. We are indebted to the *Daily Worker,* which has been performing an outstanding public service in fighting the warmakers, for calling to our attention the following statement in the August 24 issue of the *Army and Navy Journal*:

"The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from these developments is that the United States has moved to the point where it is committed to assist the British empire in the war against Germany. . . . Only the blind can fail to see that the United States is moving rapidly toward participation in the world struggle. 'Measures short of war' have been expanded to measures at the point of war."

This was written before the announcement of the destroyers-bases exchange. How much truer is it today. The fact is that President Roosevelt has delivered the peace of America into the hands of Hitler. Under international law the Nazis would be entitled formally to regard the United States as a belligerent; only their preoccupation with the war on Britain causes them to refrain from doing so—yet.

The peace of America has likewise been placed at the mercy of the British imperialists. In announcing the deal with Britain the administration cited Churchill's speech of June 4 as a guarantee that the British Fleet—together with the fifty American destroyers—would not be surrendered or scuttled. But this was the speech in which Churchill vowed that should the British Isles be conquered, "our empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British fleet, will carry on the struggle until in God's good time the New World, with all its power and might, sets forth to the liberation and rescue of the Old." Is this the guarantee that the Roosevelt administration accepted in transferring the fifty warships—a guarantee to drag America into Europe's horror? The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* spoke the simple truth when it said the other day: "If this secret deal goes through, the fat is in the fire, and we all may as well get ready for a full-dress participation in the European war."

This means the straitjacket of conscription. It means the *Gleichshaltung* of the trade unions. It means the suppression of civil liberties, the outlawing of all opposition. It means that death's head of unbridled capitalist rule, fascism. Senator Pepper of Florida, in a speech on the Senate floor, said that if his proposals for giving the President dictatorial powers "be treason, make the most of it." The President is already taking dictatorial powers. The conscription bill will give him more, will strengthen the grip of the fascist-minded men of wealth and their loyal generals and admirals over the lives of millions of Americans. To Wall Street insiders this is as obvious as two plus two.

What of the Republican Party? It is playing the role of "peace party" by becoming the chief assistant of the Democrats in carrying through their war program. Secretary of the Interior Ickes, in his recent reply to Wendell Willkie, declared that the President was too busy with the Battle of Britain to debate the issues of the election with his Republican rival. And Willkie has been debating these issues—by supporting Roosevelt. The meaning of this becomes clearer in the light of Earl Browder's sensational charge that the former president of Commonwealth & Southern was nominated by a big business junta organized by Thomas W. Lamont of the House of Morgan in agreement with Roosevelt. The Republican standard bearer's belated attempt to raise the dictatorship issue in connection with the destroyers-bases deal only underlines his hypocrisy; the first comment he made gave unqualified support to the deal and contented itself with mild criticism of the failure to consult Congress. Moreover, William Allen White, Republican chairman of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, stated that both Sen. Charles L. McNary, Willkie's running mate, and Rep. Joseph W. Martin, the Willkie campaign manager, knew of the deal in advance.

Clearly the American people have to wage this fight to save our country from dictatorship and war against both old parties and their leaders. Hoover shot down the bonus marchers in 1932. In 1940 Roosevelt's police beat up delegates of the American Peace Mobilization who were holding religious services on the Capitol steps. In these two acts, eight years apart, is revealed the true nature of the "national unity" that both Roosevelt and Willkie seek. This is what capitalism means: suppression, terror, war. Shall this be the fate of America? Shall this be the end of the high vision that the men once held in their eyes who hacked a nation out of a wilderness and overthrew tyranny, that they and their children might be free?

Out of America, out of the farms and factories and offices comes a rumbling of protest. That rumbling must become a roar. Let every trade union, every organization, every individual act. The President and Congress must feel the power of the people. No more secret deals, no more acts of war, no more gag rule. Every congressman who voted for conscription must be defeated at the polls. Millions of lives are at stake, freedom, the things that make life meaningful. Shall we be helpless pawns, or shall we strive to be masters of our own destiny?

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The Rumanian Pot Boils Over

Britain's Rumanian friends try to save their necks by provoking a German-Soviet clash. The Carpathians: a geographic divide in Rumanian history. The myth of a Latin Rumania.

THE Rumanian pot which has been on the fire these many months is now boiling over. The steam which is being generated in the process makes it difficult to see what is actually happening in the pot. Much of the steam comes, however, not from the pot alone but is being manufactured by the American press as part of the "All Aid Short of War" which our loyal press magnates are rendering the sore-pressed empire of King George VI. Britain's need to irritate Soviet-German relations is now not less but rather more urgent than in the halcyon months of Munich when the Chamberlain umbrella nudged Hitler to go east. As a result of the historic retribution which the Munich plot has wreaked upon its perpetrators, the British empire today faces destruction. So it was fondly "alleged" and "reported" in our press that in the Balkans a Soviet-German conflict is brewing which will deflect the Nazi bombers toward Moscow. The Carol regime, which found itself in as desperate a plight as its former British ally, also saw salvation in provoking a Soviet-German clash.

On August 30, the day when the Vienna *Diktat* transferred northern Transylvania to Hungary, the headlines emphasized that Rumania had been guaranteed against the Soviet Union and that German troops were on their way to man the Soviet-Rumanian border. Not a word in the published text of the Vienna Agreement could be adduced to support these headlines nor was a single representative of the German or Italian government quoted. The nearest thing to an official quotation was attributed to the outgoing foreign minister of the Gigurtu Cabinet who announced that Germany had promised Rumania a military agreement "unlike that ever given to any other country in the world except little Slovakia." This was promptly branded as "nonsense" by German spokesmen who declared (New York *Times,* August 31), "What was agreed upon in Vienna is shown by the published agreement. There are no other provisions." And on September 2, in accordance with the terms of the Soviet-German pact, the USSR and Germany concluded a new treaty covering the new Soviet-German frontier created by the admission of Lithuania to the USSR. Similarly, on September 4 the headlines were "Red Army Calls Two New Classes." The fact that these "two new classes" were the annual classes usually called in September was conveniently ignored.

Momentous events are due and overdue in Rumania; events far more important than the abdication of King Carol and the substitution of one clique of Rumanian landlords for another. But one cannot hope to discern them in the handouts which British propaganda issues in our press as reports from Bucharest or Budapest. One can only analyze the historical, geographic, economic, and ethnic facts involved and correlate them to the drift of events.

Rumania, like Bulgaria, presents the classic Balkan pattern of a Slavic or semi-Slavic nation ruled by a German king. The pattern is symbolic of Balkan history, for the Balkan countries were largely byproducts of the clash between Romanov and Hapsburg imperialist ambitions in the Balkans. Originally a part of the Ottoman empire, the Balkan peoples were liberated from the Turkish yoke by a century of Russo-Turkish wars. Affinity of origin, religion, and language predisposed the Balkan peoples to look upon "Mother Russia" as their liberator, despite the imperialist aims of the czarist regime. But Austro-Hungarian and Russian ambitions collided in the Balkans and, for reasons of their own, the Western powers usually backed Austria-Hungary. As fast as Russian armies wrested a Balkan province from Turkey the Western powers stepped in to convert that province into an "independent" kingdom. And to balance the pro-Russian sentiments of the Slavic, Greek Orthodox populations, German princelings were installed as rulers.

Popularly supposed to be a "Latin" country, Rumania is no exception to this Balkan pattern. Contrary to the affectation of the Paris-bred Rumanian ruling class, the Rumanians are predominantly a Slavic, slavonic-speaking people. Modern Rumanian is no more Latin than modern English is Latin, and no less slavonic than English is Anglo-Saxon. The proportion, according to the *Encyclopædia Britannica,* is three parts slavonic to two parts Latin. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century the Rumanians used the Cyrillic alphabet, as do the Russians, Bulgarians, and Serbians. The Latin alphabet now in use (specially accented to transliterate the old Cyrillic) was introduced in the latter half of the nineteenth century from Austro-Hungarian, Roman Catholic Transylvania to counteract the cultural gravity of Slavic, Greek Orthodox Russia. And it was only in 1881, when the historically separate provinces of Moldavia and Walachia were united under King Carol's Hohenzollern ancestor, that the word Rumania first appeared on the map.

Ron Bloomberg

Ex-King Carol of Rumania

During the first world war Rumania, like Italy, hesitated between the offers of the Allies and those of the Central Powers. The Allies offered to pay her with Austro-Hungarian territory (Transylvania, Bucovina, Banat). The Central Powers offered to pay her with Russian territory (Bessarabia). Late in the war Rumania decided to accept the Allied bid, but within a few weeks of her entrance into the war her army was crushed and most of the country occupied by the Central Powers. Like Russia, Rumania signed a separate peace with Germany. But whereas Russia, who had fought more than three years for the Allies, was punished for her separate peace by the dismemberment of her western territories, Rumania was uniquely rewarded. She was ceded not only the Austro-Hungarian territories which the Allies had promised, but the Russian territories which had been offered her by the enemy to fight the Allies. Rumania emerged from Versailles swollen to more than twice her size, not in reward for services rendered during the war, but in prepayment for services to be rendered as southern anchor of the Cordon Sanitaire and as one of the main bases for the contemplated war against the Soviets. That very year the new Rumania demonstrated her dependability by helping to crush the three months' old Hungarian Soviet and putting into power the fascist regime of Admiral Horthy, which is now so ungratefully grabbing northern Transylvania from Rumania.

Rumania's fate was sealed at Munich. Like all the smaller European states Rumania was a chip in the balance-of-power game. When Britain, in an attempt to bribe Hitler to attack the Soviet Union, lost the traditional balance of power at Munich, she sealed the fate not only of Czechoslovakia but of every smaller European state from Sweden to Greece, including such smaller states as France, Italy and, perhaps, Britain herself.

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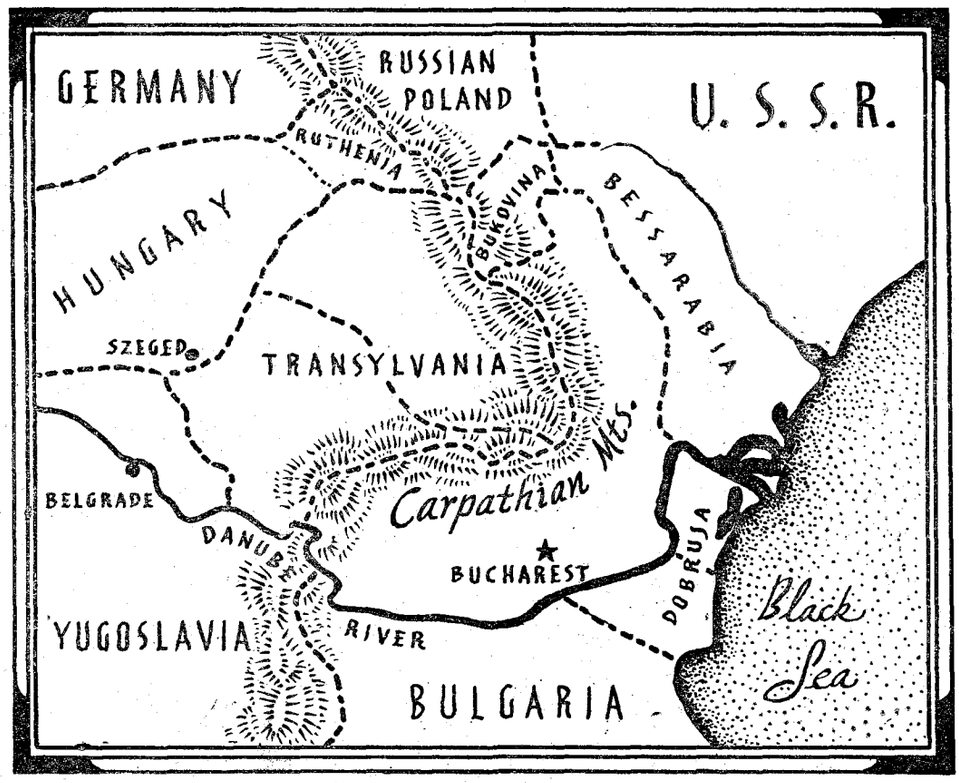
Between the continental states that are emerging from the second world war—such as German-dominated western Europe, the US-dominated western hemisphere, and the USSR—buffer states are anachronisms. They are too apt to become military outposts of the enemy. As a result, in the capitalist-fascist blocs, where one nation is dominant, there are puppet states such as Hungary, Manchukuo, and Panama. In the USSR, where there is no master nation, there are no puppet nations: all the border states that gravitate into the orbit of socialism become equal republics of the Soviet Union. Sooner or later, therefore, the string of "buffer" states between Germany and the Soviet Union face the choice of becoming Nazi puppet states—which their ruling classes desire—or of turning to socialism and achieving true freedom and independence.

It was the diplomatic object of the Soviet-German pact to ensure that this process, set in motion unwittingly by Britain and France at Munich, should not result in a major war in eastern Europe as it had in western Europe. To date it has worked in a way that illumines the difference between socialism and capitalism. On the Soviet side of the political watershed the Byelo Russians and Ukrainians of eastern Poland have been reunited with their brothers of Soviet Byelo Russia and the Ukraine, and Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have rejoined the Soviet family of nations as union republics. On the German side of the political watershed the Poles have joined the Czechs as serfs of the Reich, and Hungary has joined Slovakia as a German puppet state. A similar process of disintegration and reintegration is taking place in Rumania.

Whether this process will complete itself peacefully in Rumania or result in a clash between the USSR and Nazi Germany will not be influenced by the wishful fancies of Downing Street as mirrored in the American press. Nor does it depend upon what particular clique of landowners is temporarily dominant in Rumania. The abdication of King Carol and the accession of Antonescu's Iron Guard-backed government represent an attempt of the Rumanian ruling class to sidetrack the profound disillusionment of the Rumanian people, who are prevented from deciding their own fate. In the final analysis it depends on the considerations which resulted in the Soviet-German pact and remained potent throughout one of the most crucial years in history. These considerations are the disinclination of the Nazi military strategists to a war on two fronts and their well pondered preference for capitalist "democracies" over socialist democracies, as military opponents. Though Hitler has crushed France and may crush Britain as well, the drift of the US into the orbit of the imperialist war is creating a new western front for Nazi Germany. There are, therefore, good reasons for thinking that the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact will continue in force for some time.

The Soviet Union is primarily concerned with fortifying the frontiers of the socialist world against any possible attack. In



the process of achieving Soviet security some twenty-three million Ukrainians, Byelo Russians, Jews, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, and Moldavians have been liberated from fascist or semi-fascist regimes. Whereas Britain in her "crusade" against fascism has already thrown some eighty million Poles, Danes, Norwegians, Belgians, Dutch, and Frenchmen into the maw of fascism, not to speak of some forty million Czechoslovakians and Spaniards whom she presented to fascism before she started her crusade.

The problem of Soviet security on the Black Sea, on which Rumania abuts, is somewhat different from that in the Baltic. The Baltic naturally divides itself into two halves; the eastern section can be safeguarded by bases in the Soviet Baltic republics and in Finland. The Black Sea is an indivisible body of water which can only be defended as a whole. In the period of Soviet-Turkish friendship it was a cardinal principle of Soviet-Turkish policy that no non-Black Sea power should be permitted to entrench itself on the Black Sea. When Turkey became a "non-belligerent" puppet of the Allies and threatened for a time to open the Black Sea back door of the Soviet Union to Allied fleets and armies, the Soviet determination to safeguard the Black Sea was only strengthened. In all this Rumania is an important factor, for just as Turkey controls the Dardanelles entrance to the Black Sea, Rumania controls the other entrance—the mouth of the Danube.

Obviously, then, there are certain geographic limits to Soviet tolerance of any power's military penetration of Rumania, either directly or indirectly. The limit probably is the arc of the Carpathian Mountains, which divide Rumania in two—a division of which history has taken note before. The upper part, consisting of Transylvania and Banat, is oriented geographically and historically toward the Danube basin. The lower part, consisting of Walachia, Moldavia, and Dobruja, is oriented toward the Ukrainian steppes and the Black Sea.

Twenty years ago Moldavian peasants fleeing across the Dniester from Rumanian oppression in Bessarabia founded the Autonomous Moldavian Republic within the Soviet Ukraine. This August this autonomous area, enlarged by a considerable part of Bessarabia, was elevated into a union republic and admitted as the thirteenth constituent republic of the Soviet Union. The new Moldavian Soviet Republic stands as a warning against anti-Soviet machination in Rumania, just as the Finno-Karelian Soviet Republic stands as a warning against anti-Soviet machination in Finland.

ALTER BRODY.

Valentine from George VI

"I AM greatly gratified that one of the air bases freely donated to this country by the British is to be on the peninsula of Avalon, in Newfoundland. For Avalon is the original Maryland. It was there that Lord Baltimore planted his first colony before he discovered that the Chesapeake Bay offered a more advantageous site. . . . Not only does Avalon come within the fold, freely and graciously, but we also gain bases in the Bahamas and in Antigua. As regards the Bahamas, while the United States may have no shadow of claim upon them, Maryland and Baltimore for some little time have had a tenant in residence there in the person of the First Lady of the islands."—*John O'Ren, in his column "Down the Spillway," the Baltimore "Sun."*

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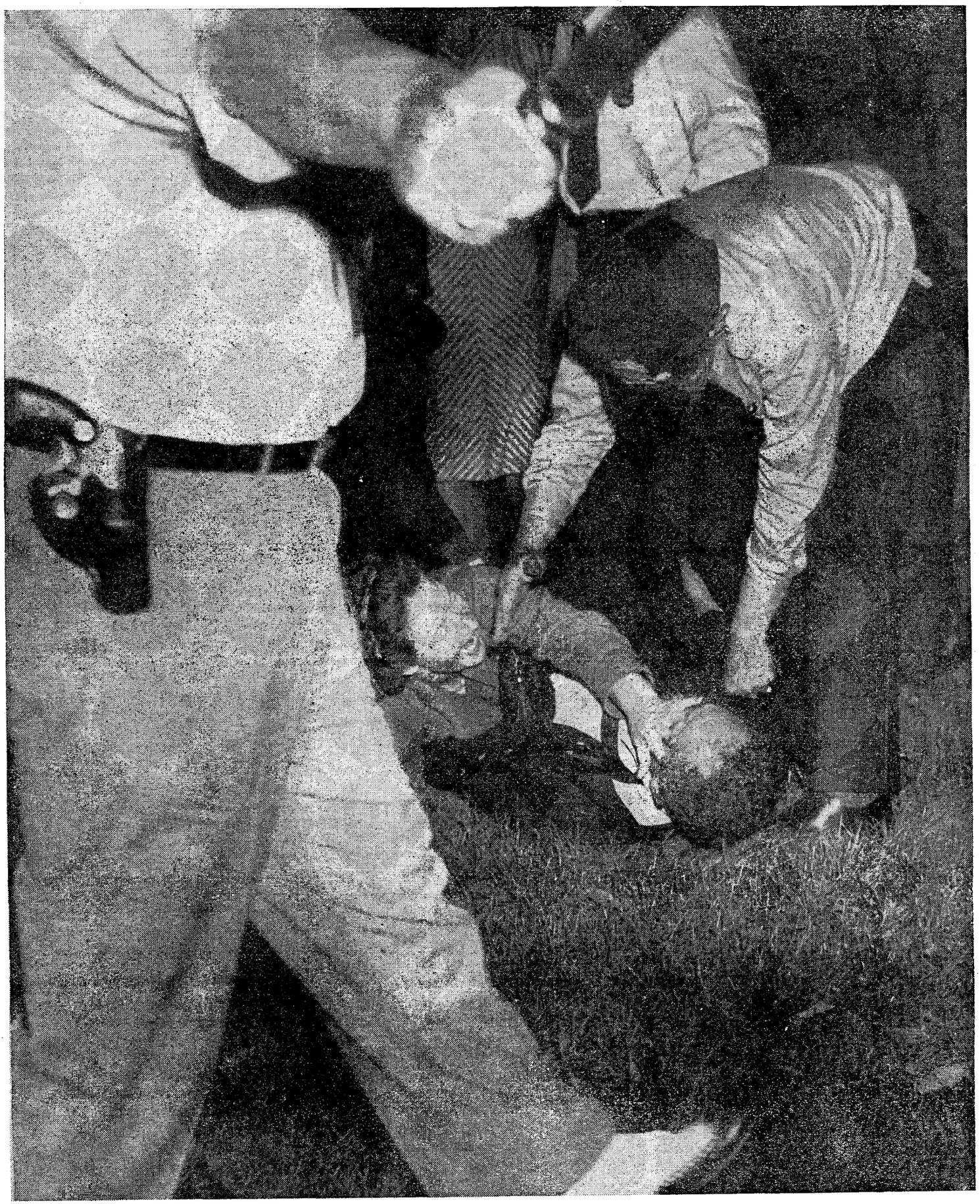

WASHINGTON, D. C., *Sept. 6, 1940: This wasn't snapped in Berlin or in Britain's Bombay, but in the shadow of the Capitol Dome. The man beaten to the ground might be you or your son—the girl shielding him from further police blows might be your wife or daughter. They might be any one of America's millions who do not agree with the Burke-Wadsworth bill. Men of the cloth led 1,500 Americans to the Capitol steps for all-night prayer for peace and prosperity. The ministers believed the right of petition was law. The club and revolver above were carried by men ordered to abrogate that law. Ordered by whom? By those men who are ramming conscription through in the name of defending democracy. Police lawlessly prevented the Rev. Owen Knox from leading in prayer, gagged Rabbi Moses Miller. According to the administration, Americans dare not even pray for peace in Washington. But America is larger than Capitol Hill.*

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This Is Stalin

A. B. Magil destroys the myths of the catchpenny Stalin-haters. The truth, too, about Boris Souvarine and Eugene Lyons. The meaning of Stalin's work.

THE past year has witnessed a boom in anti-Stalin literature. Magazines and publishing houses have vied with each other in turning out articles and books exposing Stalin, explaining the enigma of Stalin, and in general showing up Stalin as a cross between Machiavelli, Peter the Great, and Al Capone. More than one writer has built a reputation—and a home on Long Island—on the fact that he hates Stalin articulately and often. In the journalistic underworld Stalin-baiting has become a specialized racket with its own gang bosses, its gang jealousies and feuds. Out of these efforts has sprung up a new Stalin mythology based largely on variations on the tale of Little Red Riding Hood and the big bad wolf. This mythology has been enriched during the past year by two books published in the United States, Boris Souvarine's *Stalin* and Eugene Lyons' *Stalin: Czar of all the Russias,* not to mention Trotsky's articles in *Life,* which were supposed to be fragments from a forthcoming biography. In addition, there appeared a curious bastard work, *Stalin's Kampf,* a title which embroiders the anti-Stalin mythos, though the book itself consists almost entirely of maliciously annotated extracts from Stalin's articles and speeches.

MISAPPREHENSION

Stalin's role in the contemporary world is of course far weightier than one would gather from the level of most of the diatribes directed against him. The misapprehension of that role on the part of our liberal intellectuals is only one aspect of their general purblindness and ineffectuality in the face of a crisis that is shaking the capitalist order to its roots. One year after the Soviet-German pact it is perhaps not amiss to examine the validity of this anti-Stalin literature and to attempt some evaluation of one of the commanding figures of our time. We need waste no words on Lyons' book, a hasty hack job which originally appeared serially in the Hearst press and is largely a rehash of Souvarine. Souvarine's lengthy opus, on the other hand, is the most ambitious book on Stalin that has yet appeared and it has been accepted in the bourgeois world as accurate and authoritative. The fact that its author was once a leading figure in the French Communist Party and that the book professes to be a work of careful, objective scholarship has added to its prestige in certain circles. Boris Souvarine's connection with Communism was, however, very brief. He was expelled from the French Communist Party sixteen or seventeen years ago; for several years thereafter he flirted with Trotsky, but the two fell out, though they continued to share hatred of the Soviet regime. Before the collapse of France articles by Souvarine appeared in that asylum of political renegades, the *New Leader,* organ of the American right-wing Socialists. His articles bore the legend, "Passed by the censor"—a notable tribute from the fifth-columnists who turned France over to Hitler.

The anti-Stalin myth rests on three main premises: (1) Stalin prior to the Bolshevik Revolution was an obscure personage who played no significant role in the Bolshevik Party; (2) Stalin seized power by unscrupulous intrigue, betraying Lenin and squeezing out "his betters," especially Trotsky; (3) Stalin retained power by the methods of the gang boss, expelling and assassinating all who stood in his way and converting the Soviet regime into a savage personal dictatorship. All three premises are elaborated by Souvarine in great detail and with what is intended as impressive documentation.

Souvarine begins his foreword by quoting a cryptic, colorless description of Stalin from the archives of the Moscow Police Department. Stalin is here incorrectly listed as a clerk, and there is no hint of his role in the revolutionary movement. Souvarine adds: "These lines contained, at the beginning of the Russian Revolution, all that was known of an obscure Bolshevik answering to the surname of Stalin." It may strike the reader as strange that a professedly objective biographer should measure the obscurity or prominence of his subject by a single document in the czarist police files. It is typical of Souvarine's method. But even if we are to judge by police documents, a great deal more was known of Stalin. For example, another document from the police files speaks of Stalin as having "always occupied extremely prominent positions in the revolutionary movement"; still another states that "he has been known since 1902 as one of the most active Social-Democratic functionaries" who "headed the Batum, Tiflis, and Baku Social-Democratic organizations at various times." (At that time both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks still formally belonged to a single organization, the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, though in fact the two groups functioned as distinct political parties.) Neither of these documents is quoted by Souvarine; obviously they do not fit into the "obscure Bolshevik" picture. I have taken these quotations from another recent book on Stalin of an entirely different stamp, *Stalin's Early Writings and Activities* (International Publishers) by Lorenti Beria, now Soviet Commissar of Internal Affairs. This book, though badly translated, is a treasure house of information about Stalin's early career and writings. It makes clear that Souvarine's "obscure Bolshevik," frequently imprisoned and condemned to exile, was actually the leader of the Transcaucasian Bolsheviks until he was assigned to work in Petrograd in 1912.

More light on Souvarine's biographical method is cast by his resort to unabashed racism in an effort to paint a picture of a barbaric Asiatic despot. Lyons repeats this part of Souvarine's book almost word for word. Since Stalin is a Georgian, Souvarine digs up a writer who states that the Georgians "are said to have a lower average intelligence than the other Caucasian peoples." Souvarine notes that, on the other hand, certain writers describe the Georgians as "friendly, frank, carefree, straightforward, sociable, and peaceable"; since Stalin cannot possibly have these qualities, Souvarine concludes that he "has a strong infusion of Turki blood, through Kurd or Tartar ancestry." This is of course much more than pseudo-scientific bilge on the same level as astrology; it reveals Souvarine's master-class contempt for oppressed nationalities and the masses as a whole (elsewhere he speaks of Stalin as lacking appreciation of theory, "a temper of mind inherited from his peasant ancestors"), the anti-democratic, chauvinist bias that leads this man who still professes to be a socialist to embrace the attitude of the author of *Mein Kampf.* This racism is all the more shameful since both Souvarine and Lyons are Jewish.

SOUVARINE'S "DOCUMENTATION"

After these samples from the early pages of the book, what shall we say of Souvarine's vaunted "objectivity," "scholarship," "documentation"? The fact is that his book has as much relation to legitimate biography as the nostrums of a snake-oil doctor have to medical science. It is largely an elaborate exhibition of intellectual sleight of hand in which history is always up Souvarine's sleeve. Often, it is true, he makes himself ludicrous by his efforts to explain away Stalin's role. Thus Stalin's consistent support of Lenin, whose greatness Souvarine pretends to acknowledge, is cited as evidence of Stalin's inferiority. By this simple device strength becomes weakness and Stalin's yeoman work by Lenin's side, when so many other leading figures wavered, is reduced to the level of faithful clerking. Stalin's article, *Marxism and the National Question,* in which he developed with exceptional fullness and penetration the Leninist theory of the national question, is dismissed by Souvarine as "the work of a diligent pupil, good for a man of his education, but it passed unnoticed." Lenin, however, appeared to have a different opinion of this article and of its author, for he wrote to Gorky: "We have a splendid Georgian who has got down to work and is writing a big article for *Prosveshcheniye* after collecting *all* the Austrian and other data." Somewhat later Lenin wrote in an

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article on the national question: "In theoretical Marxist literature this state of affairs and the principles of the national program of social democracy have already been elucidated recently (here Stalin's article comes first)."

On his return to Petrograd in 1913 from a visit abroad, where he saw Lenin, this "obscure Bolshevik" was entrusted, as admitted by Souvarine, with nothing less than the guidance of the Bolshevik deputies in the Duma. But, Souvarine hastens to inform us, Stalin's task was actually "the transmission to them of Lenin's instructions." "The strong-fisted Stalin was there to keep them on 'the line' traced by their leader. Lenin did the thinking for all of them." That Lenin, who was living in Cracow, guided the general work of the Bolshevik deputies, and for that matter of the entire party, is undoubtedly true. But that he could from a distance of hundreds of miles and in conditions of illegality send daily solutions for the detailed problems with which the deputies were faced is a miracle which Souvarine gladly credits to Lenin for the purpose of reducing Stalin to the role of a robot transmitter. The fact is that, the year before, Stalin, despite his "obscurity" and his absence in exile at the time, had at Lenin's suggestion been elected to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. When he escaped from exile in February 1912, he was made head of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee. In other words, Stalin was already one of the recognized leaders of the party.

One more example of Souvarine's strained attempts to cover up Stalin's true role. In July-August 1917 the historic Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik Party met in Petrograd. With Lenin forced into hiding by the terror of the Kerensky government, the Central Committee chose Stalin to take his place and deliver the two main reports—a rather surprising tribute to an "obscure Bolshevik." But, according to Souvarine, this congress, which met shortly after the great July demonstration at one of the crucial turning points in the development of the Revolution, merely "had to confirm past action and to dispatch current business." As for Stalin, he "played a leading part as mouthpiece of the directing central organization." Thus the second in command to Lenin is a mere mouthpiece for wiser heads! (Incidentally, Trotsky, in his *History of the Russian Revolution,* solves the problem of Stalin's role at the Sixth Congress in his own way. He simply omits all mention of the Congress.)

BRASS-CHECK JOURNALISM

What becomes then of the legend of the obscurity and insignificance of Stalin? Even from Souvarine's tortured account it is evident that this fable can safely be consigned to the distortions and hoaxes of brass-check journalism. Trotsky, who did not join the Bolsheviks till the middle of 1917, got the bourgeois press headlines, but in the Bolshevik Party it was known that Stalin's role in the Revolution and the Civil War ranked him next to Lenin.

But if the first premise of the anti-Stalin myth will not hold water, what is left of the second premise, that after Lenin's death Stalin seized the reins of the Bolshevik Party by unscrupulous intrigue? This charge is based largely on Trotskyite slander and gossip. But is it, after all, so surprising that the man who was chosen by the Central Committee to take Lenin's place temporarily in July 1917 should have been selected to replace him permanently when he died in January 1924? It would be more logical to assume that if there was intrigue—and there was—it came from those who opposed the wishes of the party in this respect. This is especially plausible in view of Trotsky's long record as a factionalist and intriguer against Lenin. He was a newcomer to Bolshevik ranks, a tourist in Bolshevism after a career spent in the service of Menshevism. Nor did he cease his struggle against Leninism after formally embracing it, as his attitude toward the Brest Litovsk treaty, his position during the discussion on the trade union question and on other matters show.

We come now to the third premise of the anti-Stalin myth: that which depicts Stalin as a bandit chief feeding on the blood of "old Bolsheviks." In this part of his book the Little Red Riding Hood tale gives way to Bluebeard as Souvarine's *leitmotif,* not to mention a dash of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue.* A sample of his objective scholarship and careful documentation: "One summer night in 1923, opening his heart to Dzerzhinsky and Kamenev, Stalin is supposed to have said, 'To choose one's victim, to prepare one's plans minutely, to slake an implacable vengeance, and then to go to bed. . . . There is nothing sweeter in the world.'" Stalin is supposed to have said. . . . And Souvarine, disguised as Lon Chaney disguised as Stalin's doorknob, is supposed to have overheard him. This is on a par with Trotsky's horrendous tale, revealed exclusively to the readers of *Life,* about Stalin's blowing pipe smoke into his son's eyes.

Far from having ruthlessly suppressed the Trotskyite opposition, the Soviet Communist Party at first showed itself exceptionally lenient. For four years after Lenin's death it permitted Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev (in October 1917 Lenin branded Zinoviev and Kamenev as strikebreakers and demanded their expulsion from the party), and their small band of followers to carry on their disruptive activity within the party and various Soviet institutions, gave them access to the press, and made their program the subject of repeated democratic discussion in the party organizations. In the last discussion on Trotskyism in 1927, 730,000 party members out of a total of 854,000 participated in voting. Of these 724,000 voted for the program of the Central Committee, four thousand (.5 percent) supported the Trotskyites, while 2,600 abstained from voting. (These figures are taken from Stalin's report to the meeting of the Central Committee in March 1937, published in English under the title *Mastering Bolshevism.)* Yet it was this .5 percent (even this number dwindled rapidly) which refused to accept the verdict of the overwhelming majority and entered the path of struggle against the party and the Soviet regime. In 1929 the Soviet government generously deported Trotsky and thus left him free to carry on his anti-Soviet activities. The party also welcomed back to the ranks and to positions of trust leading Trotskyites and members of the right-wing opposition (which had as little popular support as the Trotskyites) who professed to have renounced their former views and accepted the party program. And even after some of these people were caught double-crossing they were given another chance. It was only after the assassination of Kirov that the Communist Party came slowly and reluctantly to the realization that these men had completely betrayed the working class and their country and degenerated into spies and agents of foreign fascist powers. The subsequent cleansing of the Communist Party, the army command, and other Soviet institutions was widely interpreted by bumbling liberals, as well as sly reactionaries, as having weakened the Red Army and the Soviet regime. The very sly reactionaries of the Wilhelmstrasse knew better, of course.

HORROR TALES

Souvarine piles horror upon prodigal horror. The natural death of Ordjonikidze in 1937 is attributed to Stalin. The death of Stalin's wife of peritonitis in 1932 is flatly declared to have been a protesting suicide, though even Lyons is constrained to deny this. Souvarine even hints darkly about the much earlier deaths of Lenin, Frunze, Dzerzhinsky, and Krassin. He flings at the reader name after name of alleged victims of the purge, knowing that few readers will be in a position to check his facts. Many of these "facts" are taken from "the unimpeachable testimony" of such gentlemen as the bogus "General" Krivitsky-Ginsberg and Andrew Smith, an obscure mountebank whose revelations appeared in the Hearst press. We learn, for example, that "there have disappeared the last survivors of the Communist International," among them Borodin. It is curious, therefore, that a year after the publication of Souvarine's book M. M. Borodin is still listed as editor of the *Moscow News.*

It is a relief to turn from this farrago of hate and falsehood to the writings of Stalin himself to discover something of the man in his own work. For this purpose even so poor and mutilated a collection (incidentally, all of it pirated) as *Stalin's Kampf* has its uses. This is a fraudulent title since the book actually demonstrates the vast gulf that lies between Stalin and the author of *Mein Kampf,* between Communism and fascism. Far preferable is a reading of Stalin's books and pamphlets, together with the Beria book, as they have been issued by International Publishers. One does not have to read far before another favorite anti-Stalin myth is exploded: that Stalin is merely a practical person, an able organizer and administrator, but devoid of any real intellectual gifts and hostile to men of ideas. Great organizer Stalin undoubtedly

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is, and he was repeatedly entrusted by Lenin with the most difficult and responsible organizational tasks. But anyone with even a cursory acquaintance with the Communist movement and its emphasis on the indivisibility of theory and practice knows—unless he chooses not to know—how preposterous is the idea that the leader of the land of socialism can be nothing but a practical organizer. The economic and political successes of the Soviet Union in the sixteen years since Lenin's death could not have been achieved without the most profound creative grasp of Marxism-Leninism, a consummate ability to generalize the experiences of history and in turn to apply these generalizations in the solution of extremely difficult practical tasks.

What distinguishes Stalin, what marks his greatness as a leader of the people is that, like Lenin, he combines to an extraordinary degree the thinker and doer. Trotsky, for all his intellectual brilliance, remained an eclectic in the realm of ideas, a phrasemonger and political chameleon, as Lenin called him, "a loud-mouthed champion with fake muscles," as Stalin wrote of him in 1913. And for all his energy and initiative, Trotsky's boundless egotism, his contempt for people and intolerance of any contrary opinion, made him incapable of the kind of collective work and leadership without which the masses cannot be effectively organized for their liberation. There was nothing fortuitous in the fact that from the inception of Bolshevism Stalin supported, Trotsky opposed Lenin's principles. Support of those principles in the contentious atmosphere of pre-revolutionary Russia meant fighting actively in their defense by word and deed. Yet Souvarine writes of Stalin's early years of Bolshevik activity that "he took no part in theoretical discussion, important at that time for the future of social democracy and for the direction of the movement. There is not a trace of him to be found in this sphere, for he left none." I have before me a recently published pamphlet containing German translations of two early articles by Stalin, one on the national question, published in September 1904 when he was not quite twenty-five, and the other on the organizational structure of the revolutionary workers' party and its relation to the working class, published in January 1905. Both are theoretical articles (the first is now available in English translation in the August issue of the *Communist)* and in both there are already evident the clarity, directness, and unwavering logic which distinguish Stalin's thinking and literary style. Had Souvarine been interested in the facts, he could have found quotations from these and other early articles by Stalin in Beria's book, the Russian text of which appeared in *Pravda* on Oct. 26, 1935.

The *Nation,* in a characteristically ignorant editorial on the death of Trotsky, described Stalin as a "practical anti-intellectual bent on personal power." Let us see how this "anti-intellectual" fared in an encounter with one of the foremost intellectuals of the English-speaking world, H. G. Wells. There are precious things in Stalin's interview with Wells in July 1934, not the least of which is the picture of the pontifical author of the *Outline of History* being taught lessons in English, French, and Russian history by Stalin. For example this:

STALIN: The Communists base themselves on rich historical experience which teaches that obsolete classes do not voluntarily abandon the stage of history. Recall the history of England in the seventeenth century. Did not many say that the old social system had decayed? But did it not, nevertheless, require a Cromwell to crush it by force?

WELLS: Cromwell operated on the basis of the constitution and in the name of constitutional order.

STALIN: In the name of the constitution he resorted to violence, beheaded the king, dispersed Parliament, arrested some and beheaded others!

Later on the discussion turned to the reforms in nineteenth century England. Wells delivered himself of the opinion that "the Chartists did little and disappeared without leaving a trace."

I do not agree with you [said Stalin]. The Chartists and the strike movement which they organized played a great role; they compelled the ruling classes to make a number of concessions in regard to the franchise, in regard to abolishing the so-called "rotten boroughs," and in regard to some points of the "Charter." Chartism played a not unimportant historical role and compelled a section of the ruling classes to make certain concessions, reforms, in order to avert great shocks.

It may come as a surprise even to some sincere persons who have unwittingly been influenced by specious propaganda to learn that a number of Stalin's early articles, written when he was still in his twenties, dealt with philosophical questions. In a series on anarchism and socialism, published in 1906 and 1907, Stalin discussed the principles of dialectical materialism with a sure grasp that already indicated his stature. Many years later he incorporated some of the ideas in these articles in writing the famous fourth chapter of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.* This chapter, published anonymously as part of a collectively written book, gives what is probably the best brief exposition of dialectical and historical materialism; it is a work of art as well as scholarship.

Carrying on the work of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, Stalin has extended the frontiers

Stalin and Gorky in 1931

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of Marxist-Leninist science and made at least three major contributions in the field of theory: on the national question, that is, the role of the oppressed nation in the epoch of imperialism; on the building of socialism in one country; and on the classless society and the nature of the state in conditions of capitalist encirclement. Most of Stalin's important articles and speeches on the national question, including the definitive *Marxism and the National Question,* have been collected in a volume published in this country under the title of *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question.* His writings on the problems of building socialism in one country, many of them polemics against the Trotskyites and right-wingers, are scattered through various books and pamphlets. The two-volume *Leninism* and Stalin's reports to the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in January 1933, to the seventeenth party congress in January 1934, and to the eighteenth congress in March 1939 contain his most important work on this subject available in English. His exposition of the theory of the classless society and the state in conditions of capitalist encirclement may be found principally in his reports to the seventeenth and eighteenth party congresses (the latter contains the most complete expression of Stalin's ideas on this subject), his speech on the new Soviet constitution in November 1936, his report to the meeting of the Central Committee in March 1937, and his letter to the young Communist, I. P. Ivanov, in February 1938. In many of these works, as well as in others that I have not mentioned, the reader will also find clues to an understanding of the Soviet-German pact as an integral and consistent part of Soviet foreign policy and of Leninist principles.

There is one other aspect of Stalin's work that I should like to touch on: his conception of leadership and his attitude toward people. There comes to mind a striking passage in his report to the meeting of the Central Committee in March 1937, shortly after the second Moscow trial. Stalin wanted to illustrate the necessity of Bolshevik leaders' maintaining the closest ties with the masses. He turned to Greek mythology (Stalin frequently employs literary allusion with great effectiveness) and cited the story of Antæus, the hero who drew his strength from his mother, Gæa, the goddess of the earth, and who was vanquished by Hercules only when the latter lifted him up in the air, thus breaking his contact with the earth.

> I think that Bolsheviks remind us of Antæus, the hero of Greek mythology [said Stalin]. Like Antæus, they are strong in keeping contact with their mother, with the masses, who bore them, fed them, and educated them. And as long as they keep contact with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible. This is the key to the invincibility of Bolshevik leadership.

Elsewhere in the same speech Stalin said:

> We leaders see things, events, and people from one side only: I would say, from above. Our field of vision, consequently, is more or less limited. The masses, on the contrary, see things, events, and people from another side: I would say, from below. Their field of vision, consequently, is also in a certain degree limited. To receive a correct solution to the question these two experiences must be united. Only in such a case will the leadership be correct. This is what it means not only to teach the masses, but also to learn from them.

How far is this Bolshevik conception of leadership from the conceptions and practices that obtain even in the most democratic capitalist countries. The capitalist production system is essentially authoritarian and anti-democratic in structure (this is most clearly seen in the mass production industries); however it may be modified or disguised, this authoritarian core is carried into political and social life. In the Communist principle of leadership, on the other hand, enunciated by Lenin and Stalin and operating in the Soviet Union, is the essence of organic rather than formal democracy. In this kind of relationship the masses participate not merely in the execution, but in the making of decisions. It is the secret of the strength of Communism and the Soviet system. Read Stalin's speech to the conference of Stakhanovites with its boundless faith in science and in the creative power of the people; read his speech to the graduates of the Red Army Academy with the famous line: ". . . of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and decisive is people"; recall his words to the aviator Chkalov in urging him not to take unnecessary risks: a man is more precious than any machine. No personal dictator ever talked like this. And no minority dictatorship could achieve in a backward, economically ruined country, without the aid of foreign capital and in the teeth of a hostile capitalist world, what the Soviet Union has achieved in twenty-three years.

In this time of trial and grief, when world capitalism is dragging millions to catastrophe and men and ideas are being tested in the fire of events, it is important for all who seek not mere escape and survival but the fullness of living for the masses of men to understand the meaning of Stalin's work, the meaning of the great socialist system that extends over one-sixth of the earth. For they represent the future of humanity as surely as revolutionary America and France and their great leaders did for another day.

A. B. MAGIL.

M.

She was a parson's daughter,
Pure, unstyn-ed was her fyme,
Till a country squire come courtin',
And the poor girl lorst her nyme.

—*From an English ballad.*

Michaels

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Rich Lands and Poor Farmers

Anna Rochester, author of "Why Farmers Are Poor," sees no gain for the countryside in either candidate's victory. Willkie offers nothing and FDR reneges on everything.

Among those whom the "liberal" Roosevelt described as ill fed, ill clothed, and ill housed, and on whom Roosevelt the war President is laying the chief burden of his "defense" program, poverty-stricken farm families rank second only to the masses of unemployed. It is not only the Joads and their kin—the hundreds of thousands who have been driven off the land. It is not only the sharecroppers—some half a million families suffering extreme exploitation and lack of security. These are only part of the great army of very poor, very small farmers which numbered about three million ten years ago and probably number four million or more today. Even those who are not hardened to human suffering can easily forget this widespread misery, just because it is scattered and tucked away out of sight. But the very poor farmers and their families outnumber the total combined population of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Los Angeles.

Unrest among farmers and pressure from Wall Street at the depth of the economic crisis compelled Roosevelt to attack these problems in the spring of 1933. Now both Democrats and Republicans are verbally committed to carrying on the same general line of farm relief. The Republicans would set high tariffs on farm imports and end the reciprocal trade agreements, although these have brought some increase in farm exports without increasing the imports of competitive farm products. Also they indulge in broad fantasies about raising the workers' standard of living by freeing business from government interference. (On this point they might well be content with the ways in which the war-minded Roosevelt is breaking down such safeguards as were set up by the "liberal" Roosevelt.)

WILLKIE'S "PARITY"

Willkie accepts the challenge of "parity" for agriculture, but with a twist that reveals more than he intended. For his "parity" is "to equalize the lot of the farmer" not with the masses of non-farm population but "with that of the manufacturer." Instead of the broad "parity" of all the agricultural population with all the industrial population (which Roosevelt and Wallace have aimed at and quite failed to achieve), Willkie comes along with a more glittering phrase and promises to make the farmer as prosperous as the manufacturer. The *small* farmer and the wage worker are entirely out of the picture. As means to this end Willkie promises nothing new. "Encouragement" of cooperation and "extension of rural electrification" have made great advances during the last eight years without touching the roots of the problem.

Since the utmost that could be expected of the Republicans is a continuation of the existing measures, it is important to see just what these amount to. Are they helping the very poor, very small farmers? Are they rescuing the middle-size family farms from extreme insecurity? Measures affecting prices and farmers' gross business return were discussed in a previous article (New Masses, June 11, 1940). Conservation work, which is tremendously important, is a special subject by itself.

For the farmers' debts, loss of equity in the land they operate, and increase of tenancy, the New Deal has had two separate sets of measures. For the mortgaged family-size farms which are—or were until the crisis—going business concerns, the federal farm credit system (dating from an act of 1916) has been further developed and expanded. For poor tenants and very small owners certain wholly new measures have been enacted. The business type of aid is administered by the Farm Credit Administration. The Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act and the various relief and rehabilitation loans for very small farmers are administered by the Farm Security Administration.

DEBTS AND INSECURITY

When Mr. Roosevelt entered the White House in March 1933, the wave of forced sales for defaulted mortgage payments and unpaid taxes had risen so high that groups of farmers were protecting one another with "penny sales" and sometimes more actively resisting the sheriffs. Large private creditors who could not extract either interest or principal from their farmer debtors were expecting the government to protect their property rights. Bonds which the federal land banks had sold to private investors were declining disastrously in price. The bonds carried no government guarantee, but the financial world and the administration were equally eager to rescue them from default. So the administration bolstered up the finances of the federal land banks with government funds and at the same time limbered up the machinery through which farmers could obtain federal credit. Interest rates were reduced and foreclosures against farmers who could not meet their payments were temporarily postponed.

John Heliker

MILLIONS IN DEBT

This phase of the crisis and the New Deal has affected chiefly the upper half of the family-size farms. And in spite of federal measures these farms, which produce the great bulk of the commercial output in wheat, livestock, dairy, and even in cotton, are still in a basically uncertain situation. At least 1,150,000 forced sales have been carried through since March 1933, but many of these farms have been taken over by new farmer-owners with a new mortgage debt. Even while tenancy increases, there remains an unending problem of farmer-owners carrying a debt which cannot be met from the current income of their farms. According to former Secretary of Agriculture Wallace: "About 25 percent of the farm mortgage debt of the country is today either delinquent or has had the payment due a year ago extended."

Tens of thousands of foreclosed farms remain in the hands of big lending agencies. Even at the low current valuations, over $1,000,000,000 worth of farm real estate was owned on Jan. 1, 1939, by insurance companies, federal and state credit agencies, and commercial banks.

For poor tenant farmers the New Deal backed the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937. This was widely hailed as opening up great possibilities of land ownership for Southern sharecroppers and other small tenant farmers in all sections of the country. But the small appropriations have allowed less than seven thousand farm-purchase loans each year, with a slight increase promising possibly nine thousand loans in 1940-41. Since the total number of tenant farmers in 1935 was 2,865,000, of whom 716,000 were sharecroppers and at least another million were also in the very-small-farm group, this phase of New Deal aid has seemed an ironic gesture.

A very much larger number of small farms have received "rehabilitation" loans, to aid them in making repairs and in obtaining some needed equipment. But for these, as also for the farm-purchase loans, funds have been doled out to some 800,000 selected individuals, approved by local committees on which the small farmers are almost never represented. Four small farmers out of five remain outside this program.

The administration has shown far less concern for genuinely constructive measures to aid small farmers as commercial producers than for helping them toward a semi-subsis-

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tence type of farming. It has never in its most liberal moments attacked the underlying problems of expanding production to meet the needs of the broadest masses of the population. It has nothing to offer the unemployed wage workers but most meager relief, and for small farmers pretty pictures of raising their own food, between brief seasons of wage labor on other men's farms.

FAMILY FARMS ENDANGERED

Problems of family-size farms—whether large or small—are bound up with forces and trends inherent in the capitalist world. As in industry, technical developments through the last 150 years have greatly increased average productivity of labor on the land. From one-half to one-third of the farm youth have normally left the land for other occupations, and farmers have been a steadily declining percentage of the working population. Farms in the lowest income groups had until the 1930's increased less rapidly than the total numbers of farms, because many of these poorest families left the land and found work elsewhere.

Technical developments on the land have not only reduced the total numbers required to produce food for a given population. They have also sharpened the class lines between the well equipped farmers and those without equipment. This has been especially marked with the development of tractor farming. The smaller family farms could not utilize the newer types of equipment, even if they could obtain them. And while this has set them apart from the medium-size and large family farms, these others have also faced serious problems of their own.

For modern equipment has involved increasing investment which could seldom be provided from the current operations of a family farm. Prices of land rose decade after decade, almost without a break, until the world war boom collapsed. This made it easy to borrow on mortgage for expansion. It made it harder to achieve clear title to land.

So even while these better set-up family farms held their share of the total farm output—and made fresh difficulties for their smaller competitors—they themselves became increasingly dependent on landlords and creditors and lost their security of possession. At the same time their situation became definitely worse by increasing monopoly control over prices and increasing production by large factory farms.

Crop restriction programs have failed to restore pre-crisis price levels. Including government benefits, the average farm income is lower than it was in the later 1920's—lower both in actual figures and in purchasing power.

WHEELER-JONES BILL

Readjustment and reduction of debt held by federal agencies was proposed in the Wheeler-Jones bill in the 1940 Congress, with administration approval. But administration forces within Congress allowed the bill to die in committee. A similar plank in the Democratic campaign platform looks well but will not carry any weight unless the mortgaged farmers develop much stronger organized action on this point.

At the depth of the crisis farmers were vigorously pressing the slogan: Our wives and children hold first mortgage on this farm. The principle that the working farmer's security on the land should come ahead of any claim by landlord or creditor expresses one of the farmers' most basic desires. Around it, as time goes on, new struggles will develop.

ANNA ROCHESTER.

"Democracy": Define It

DEFINITION of democracy according to the Army Training Manual No. 200025, used for 1928 to 1932:

Democracy: A government of the masses.... Attitude toward property is Communistic, negating property rights. Attitude toward law is that the will of the majority shall regulate, whether it be based upon deliberation or governed by passion, prejudice, and impulse, without restraint or regard to consequences. Results in demagogism, license, agitation, discontent.

To Eugene J. Loveman

(*Gandesa*)

We used to roam along the Gravesend shoreline, poking through the piles of driftwood and debris looking for something—treasure, or some strange sea-thing cast up on the beach after storms. Old women came down with sacks to gather the dead fish and children came with wagons to cart away loads of broken, tarred timber. We filled our pockets with smooth, round stones as white as moons and sat on the ruined walls of an old prison and watched the liners sailing through the Narrows, down the Jersey coast past Sandy Hook. We knew all the bells and lights and all the signal sounds and channels. We were always searching for something——

On the sea fringe
where the waves
wash umber on the crusted rocks,
sand whispers in the scoured shells
and sea gulls poise
to plummet under surf
for silver little fish

Here where Columbus smiles
when steamers vanish
downhill in the east
we lit the driftwood fires,
and in the sharkteeth flames
saw naked dancers on a jungle shore
worshipping weird idols and their gods.

We traced the lonely latitudes
where sad Magellan sailed,
and felt the tremor
of the other shore
beneath our feet
when giant combers fell.

The years have curtained down
behind the Jersey hills,
And now while you sleep
in the other shore of Spain
boys as we were wander here again

and scan the sea lanes
where the cargoes ride
to lands where guntongues
bellow heavenward,
And when evening
drifts in from the east
they light perennial fires,

and constant watchers
feed the phoenix flames
that flicker on the margins of the world.

ALEXANDER F. BERGMAN.

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Colonel Somervell's Kultur

The brass hat running the New York WPA runs true to form. Art, to him, "is a method of camouflaging ships in wartime."

When Col. Brehon B. Somervell, New York State WPA administrator, announced for publication that the one hundred suspended from WPA rolls, suspended for having enrolled as Communists in the 1936 elections, would not be permitted to plead an interim change in their political affiliations, he was running true to form as the Wild Man of WPA.

The Roosevelt administration in its post-1939, pre-Election Day phase has abandoned the essence, but not the forms, of the New Deal. A Republican President might bluntly call for the handing over of work relief to the states, but a Democratic one must renew his statement that the unemployed should be cared for, even after whittling the WPA budget in his message to Congress. Hence there are Washington stomachs that turn queasy when the Columbus Avenue military man pulls such boners as calling openly for fifty thousand stoolpigeons to inform on the political beliefs of their fellow workers.

HE LIKES HIS JOB

But Somervell likes his job. He takes enormous pleasure in savagely carrying out any anti-Red, anti-progressive measures enacted by a war-hysterical Congress and believes (erroneously) that he has added greatly to the efficiency of WPA in New York City. And he has powerful connections in the national military machine. In the army seniority gives him the edge on Col. Francis Harrington, his present superior. Organizations in the habit of dealing with both gentlemen, such as the Workers Alliance, Teachers Union Local 453, and the United American Artists, are unanimous in declaring that either the New York colonel frequently scraps the Washington colonel's specific instructions, or somebody's lying.

On WPA it is an open secret that Somervell doesn't like the white collar projects. Arts projects draw his special ire. In 1937 the arts projects were transferred from his jurisdiction to a federal one on the urgent and obvious plea of their workers that an army man could know nothing of their special problems. When he resumed his sway in 1939, there were incidents such as the one when an applicant being tested for a job on the Art Project was told by his examiner to "sit down and paint a mural." Education projects under him have been subject to a consistent policy of attrition and sabotage. In short, his approach to his duties as WPA administrator has been what might be expected of one of his type, narrow of mind, unaware of his own limitations, fiercely resentful of criticism, and tending to regard all professionals as slightly wacky and certainly negligible people. Art, to him, is a method of camouflaging ships and tractors in wartime; education is useful if it trains behind-the-line technicians; music a means of inspiring fervor in marching men; it is not known whether he has as yet evolved any reason for the existence of writers.

When the present Congress, in passing the 1941 Appropriations Act, tacked thereto an amendment making it illegal for the WPA to employ Communists and members of other minority groups, Somervell smacked his lips. The act had not yet become law when all New York project workers found an affidavit stuck under their noses, which they must sign, or else. Those who did not sign, whether because of actual membership in a forbidden organization or from resentment at the invasion of their constitutional privileges, were of course instantly dropped from the WPA rolls.

Somervell's further steps in the enforcement of the provision showed the same headlong and unconsidered zeal. A poster with a design based on the caliper and micrometers suddenly began to look like a hammer and sickle to him, and he fired both the artist and the artist's supervisor, a known anti-Communist. The portrait of Franz Reichert, inventor of the parachute, in a mural at Floyd Bennett Airport resembled Stalin to his eyes, and the mural was ripped down and burned. He announced that he thought there were ten thousand Communists on WPA rolls, and that he would check up on all the names mentioned by the Dies and Woodrum committees with an eye to more firings and to action by the Department of Justice.

There was in 1931 and 1938 on the Writers Project a harmless-looking, benign old man by the name of Edwin Banta. For several weeks he went around collecting autographs on the flyleaf of a book, a not unusual occupation on that project. Those who signed the second and third pages, perhaps even those who signed the first, may never have had an opportunity to see the inscription at the top. In due course of time Mr. Banta turned the book over to the Dies committee, testifying that the names were those of Communists. The signatories never were called to tell their side of the story.

About the end of July, however, fifteen of them, who happened to be still on WPA rolls after the signing of the affidavits, were handed the curt typewritten explanation: "Indefinite suspension pending investigation by Washington, D. C., office." A few more layoffs due to stoolpigeon letters brought the number to twenty-two. On the day when their paychecks for the last two weeks they had worked were due, those suspended were surprised to find their letterboxes empty. Oh, yes, they were told on inquiry, it's the custom—in cases of indefinite suspension the last paychecks are always withheld; we thought you knew that.

No contemporary evidence was or has been brought forward to show that any of the suspended people were Communists *at the time of signing the affidavit*. The charges are all two or three years old. It was enough for the colonel that the suspendees had been accused of leftward leanings at any time during their lives. In this he went far beyond even the letter of the law, which could not, any more than any other law, be made retroactive.

Officials of the Teachers Union and Workers Alliance returned from visits to Washington reporting that Somervell had exceeded his authority. WPA regulations on the subject gave the state administrator authority to suspend *only* when "the weight of evidence establishes a reasonable case" that a false affidavit has been made. Having autographed someone's book two years previous was hardly a "reasonable case." Washington shook its head; too bad, the Wild Man is at it again. They settled down to a campaign of waiting, while four or five investigators of the WPA Bureau of Investigation here patiently searched police records and magazine files for more evidence, and the suspended people starved.

Not all of the twenty-two have obtained relief. The Teachers Union, through its attorney, Archibald Bromsen, is making a test case in the Federal Court of Claims on the legality of withholding paychecks. No one has had a hearing. Meanwhile Somervell, on August 29, announced the suspension of a hundred more workers who had enrolled as Communists in the 1936 elections. None would be called to Columbus Avenue for questioning, because, according to the colonel, this privilege was only for those about whose case there might be some doubt. As to allowing anyone to plead that he had changed his party affiliation in the meantime, "if we opened up that possibility, every one of the hundred would come in and say he was no longer a Communist"!

THE ADMINISTRATION'S CHOICE

The administration which chose Colonel Somervell to head WPA in New York state was well aware of his qualities. Though his crude methods may offend, their pertinence to the new Roosevelt demands for "sacrifice" must not be lost sight of. Abandonment of WPA is easier if it can be done piecemeal, starting with the least popular group (the aliens, barred from employment a couple of years ago) and moving thence to a group which can be tarred, however unjustly, with an unpopular label. The elements in this which are peculiar to the colonel, his vindictiveness, his arrogant assumption of authority, are worthy of study because they represent, in microcosm, what the American people may expect, what in particular American culture may expect, at the hands of military men if such are allowed to dominate the national scene.

PAULA ANDREWS.

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NEW MASSES
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The Hitlerian Art

FEDERAL JUDGE JOHN C. KNOX emulates Attorney General Jackson: he makes decisions to suit. Judge Knox has forbidden Earl Browder to leave "the jurisdiction of the court" to conduct his campaign for the presidency. Three months ago, when the US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Browder's conviction on a technical violation of passport usage, NEW MASSES pointed out that this was a clear case of political persecution, despite efforts to make it appear that the Communist candidate was a petty criminal. Now Judge Knox admits as much. "Do you think," he inquired of Browder's counsel, Carol King, "that there is any obligation on the part of the government to afford a man who wishes to tear down the government the opportunity to do so?" We hardly need discuss the falseness of that moldy phrase "tear down the government"—or its hypocrisy in the mouth of a Roosevelt servant. Of more significance is the judge's candor: he says plainly that in his opinion Browder's *politics* make it preferable that he be kept at home.

How account for the petty vindictiveness, the peculiar arrogance of this "legal" decision—which was made, no doubt, at the behest of the Roosevelt administration? Browder himself has answered that question:

> When a "close friend of the President" threatened last October to stop my speaking in public on behalf of the Communist Party, most people thought we were exaggerating when we marked that moment as opening a drive into war and military rule for America. . . . Mr. Roosevelt has studied well the Hitlerian art and bids fair to outdo the record of his teacher. My own little problems are of interest to the American people because they embody in essence the great tragedy of a whole nation—tricked into the chains of a gang of military adventurers as surely and disastrously as were the German people.

Such words will not "tear down the government" but they will surely help to tear down the "democratic" shibboleths of Roosevelt, Knox, Stettinius, Willkie. The truth in these words makes them powerful, as the entire Communist program is powerful. That is why Browder is forbidden to travel, why broadcasting facilities are being denied Communist candidates. But it takes more than a fiat, or jail itself, to keep the truth from people. The Communist Party in many states reports that already more than enough signatures have been secured to put the party's candidates on the ballot. This in spite of persecution that makes as shabby a record of official vigilantism as this country has seen. Judge Knox's decision is aimed not only at the Communist Party: it is directed at the hundreds of non-Communists who sign those ballot petitions; at the thousands of people of whatever political affiliation who insist upon their constitutional right to hear what representatives of a legal party have to say.

Wilting Willkie

WALTER LIPPMANN, two weeks ago, removed his Willkie button and applied the pinpoint to a tender part of the candidate's anatomy. Gen. Hugh Johnson followed, about eight days later, with a kick in the pants. Each columnist, in his own way, was trying to revive the Man of Action who triumphed in June. Mr. Lippmann finds that the candidate has not translated his "great popular victory" at Philadelphia into dictatorship over his party; specifically, he hasn't swung rank and file Republicans at a faster tempo along the road to war. Hugh Johnson's complaint is that Willkie says "Yes—but" instead of a positive "No!" Other Wendell enthusiasts have begun to discover that the pride of Rushville, Ind., repeats his lines, muffs his cues, and intones "private enterprise" with the vim of Strong and Silent Cal. Willkie's opposition tactic of "I can do it better" is said to have the White House in stitches.

General Johnson and his fellow critics should have more consideration. How *can* a candidate say "No!" instead of "Yes—but" when he was nominated virtually on the promise to say "Yes"? How can he do anything but "fire an air rifle," as an editorial in the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* puts it, when he knows that the only campaign ammunition worth more than a Willkie button lies in opposing conscription, war, and finance dictatorship—the three-point star to which Mr. Willkie hitched his bandwagon. In his quandary the candidate has fallen back on the "professional politicians" whom he boasted of strangling in Philadelphia. He confers with Joe Pew, calls together GOP machine leaders (urging them for God's sake to *do* something), and begs his party to believe that he's really a Republican. Mr. Roosevelt, however, may be laughing too soon. That Willkie button which reads, "I am a Democrat voting for Willkie" has an obverse—substituting "Republican" and "Roosevelt"—which is just as plain and no prettier in the sight of the American people.

Bases, Destroyers, Empire

THE acquisition of British naval bases from Newfoundland to British Guiana, and the simultaneous gift of fifty destroyers to Britain, is now generally recognized as the turning point in our pre-war history. The United States is admittedly changing from "non-belligerent" to belligerent status: the New York *Times* for September 4 believes "this is a step in the direction of more active participation in the defense of our common stake in the Atlantic, and we think that in all frankness it must be recognized as such." J. L. Garvin, of London's *Sunday Observer,* expects "in his personal opinion" that the United States will enter the war after the elections. The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* labels the base-destroyer deal as a measure of war as well as the assumption of dictatorial power by the President. All those who reviled NEW MASSES in the past year for warning against each step down the road to war are now either boasting cynically that we are getting into it or, like Freda Kirchwey in last week's *Nation,* insist that we're already in it and therefore can't do a thing about it.

In fact, we are not only closer to war in Europe but have actually taken the first measure of aggression in South America. The base in British Guiana gives Washington something it could not have got directly—a territorial foothold on the South American mainland—and places Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia within the range of American guns. Costa Rica, the United Fruit Company's little colony, has drawn the logical conclusions by offering the United States its Cocos Island off the western shore of the Panama Canal. Ecuador will thereby virtually be compelled to follow suit with an offer of rights to the Galapagos Islands, and then Washington will have Peru within range of its airplanes.

War materials are flowing to Canada in ever larger volume; some people are so intoxicated by the prospect of the future that they say openly what others still whisper in private. For example, Raymond Clapper, the influential Scripps-Howard columnist, had some things to say on September 6 which are worth study. Quite without inhibitions, Clapper trumpets:

> Our role is to seize world naval and air supremacy. Our role is to be tough about the thing that matters to us. Our role is to be hard-headed and shrewd and to play with cold calculation for the stakes that are within our grasp. Our role, and there should be some kinder and more tactful way of saying it, is to help save what can be saved of the British empire and bring it in reality, although not in form, within our orbit.

London Bombed

THE bombing of the cities has begun in earnest, the shame and horror, the crowning frightfulness of capitalist civilization. Most of us can still recall when Shanghai was bombed, its Chapei suburbs going up in flames. Dimly, it is true, we recall when the tribesmen of Ethiopia were bombed out of their villages. And the memory of Madrid, of Valencia and Barcelona is a living, ever-living memory. Then there was Warsaw, and all during this year the city of Chungking, far off in China. Last week the curse caught up with the capital cities of Germany and Great Britain. We chilled when the news reports mentioned the bombing of Berlin's suburb of Wedding, the workers' neighborhood, the stronghold of the Communist Germany—who does not remember the song with the line: *"der rote Wedding marschiert"?* And now

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London, rich with the culture of centuries, the metropolis of eight million human beings, was bombed again and again last week, its docks and public buildings burning all night, hundreds killed in seven- and nine-hour raids, thousands injured. Again it is the East End, the working class quarter, which bears the brunt of the destruction.

The most difficult idea for people to get in a war of this kind is that the enemy is at home—*"Der Feind steht im eignen Lager"*—in Karl Liebknecht's immortal words. And yet, it seemed to us, that should have been easier to understand in London last week than anywhere else in Europe. The men who are responsible for the horror in London are not the Nazis alone: they are the British ruling class, the class of men whose civilization has brought such suffering to India, to Ireland, to China, to Spain, to the good people of Czechoslovakia, and now to England herself. It is their handiwork, in the deeper sense, their bombs, which are now taking British lives. England will never be free of this bombardment, nor will Europe be free from fascism, until the British ruling class has been swept into history.

Perspective

HERR HITLER'S speech last week ("I have offered my hand to the British people so often. An understanding with England was the aim of my foreign policy. I now prefer to fight until a clear decision is reached") means that another peace offer has been rejected in London. And from Churchill's last two speeches it is clear that the British ruling class is counting upon Washington support—destroyers, war materials, and perhaps even more belligerent measures—to continue the struggle. It seems to us that Hitler cannot win by air bombardments alone, no matter how paralyzing; he must land troops. For some time we have felt that British censorship was concealing the extent of German damage. Last week, however, it was generally admitted that the coastal ports of Manston, Hawkinge, and Lympne have been abandoned, together with airports in the neighborhood; shipping has been rerouted to western ports. We should not be surprised, therefore, that the moment is arriving when the Germans will try to cross the Channel. At least half a million men would be required in such land operations; five times that many for accessory purposes. It is impossible to judge whether the Germans are capable of this effort, although it is more likely that if they can retain positions on the island itself, they can probably advance toward London.

Exit Carol

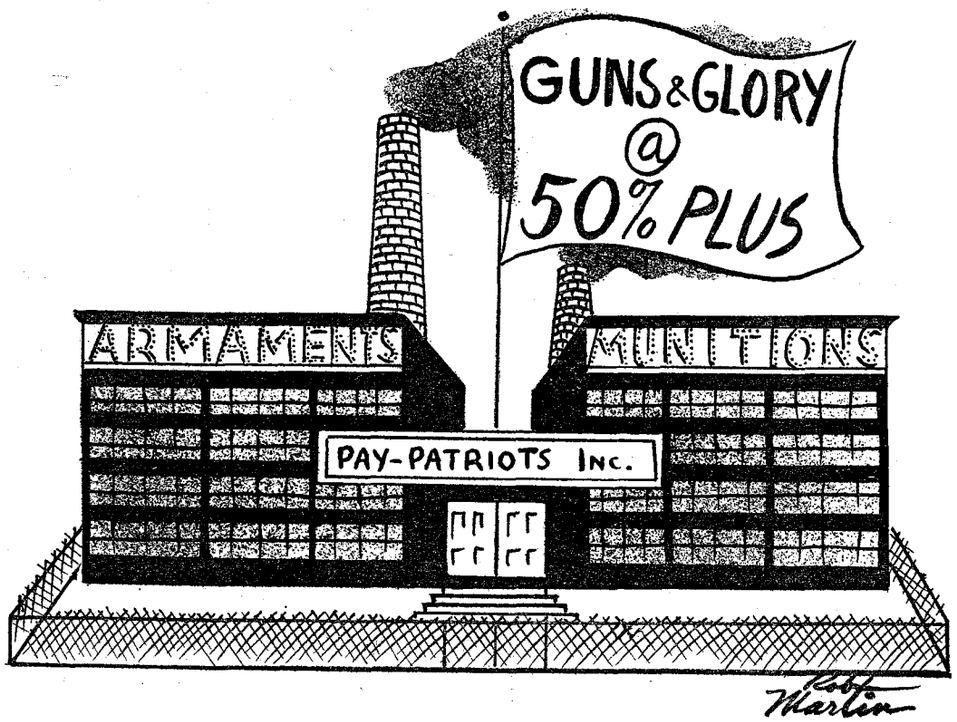
KING CAROL'S abdication provides the commercial press with the opportunity to drag out that tarnished tale of Magda Lupescu—the redhead with whom the king again goes into exile to live a modest life on investments long prepared in advance for this eventuality. The truth is that ever since his seizure of dictatorial powers in February 1938 the king had dragged Rumania through successive disasters: the alliance with France gave way to the imposition of the Nazi economic agreement in March 1939, after which came the ill-fated "guarantee" from Britain and, as the culminating stroke, the Vienna *Diktat* which sliced Transylvania away. Popular anger represented much more than a nationalist upsurge: there were widespread railway strikes, and reports of troop mobilizations against working class quarters give a glimpse of the depth of the political crisis. Evidently only a stronger hand, in the shape of Gen. Ion Antonescu, could appease and control the situation. As usual, demagogy accompanies dictatorship: Antonescu has halted the demolition of Bucharest homes which Carol had enforced to improve the grandeur of his palace. Cabinet ministers have been deprived of private railway cars; a hue and cry is raised against "graft in politics." Too preoccupied with consolidating his rule, Antonescu has not yet formed a Cabinet. The New York *Times* correspondent from Bucharest says that a struggle is already looming between himself and the Iron Guard. This organization, whose leaders Carol assassinated, is apparently anxious to rule by itself, or else rule the general. But it is not strong enough to win immediate favor with the German masters, who want the quickest possible order and therefore favor Antonescu's bayonets. In any case, the kings are going in Europe, and good riddance. But not until they take their destiny into their own hands will the Rumanian people be free.

No Embargo Yet

NEW MASSES has insisted for seven weeks that there is no embargo on scrap iron and aviation gasoline to Japan. Mr. Roosevelt's announcement of the licensing order for No. 1 scrap iron on July 26 and the alleged ban on aviation fuel have simply served to deceive the public, whatever its value may have been in the diplomatic tussle with Japan. Licensing is not an embargo; and a license on No. 1 scrap does not affect No. 2 scrap—the kind Japan has been buying. It was further revealed several days ago that Japan has been purchasing lowgrade fuel and redistilling it, to get the suitable octane rating for aviation purposes. One hundred and seventy thousand gallons of such fuel were being loaded at Houston, Tex., for shipment to Japan two weeks ago. Rumors circulated last week that a real embargo would at last be placed on all scrap iron, presumably because of domestic rearmament needs. Such a measure is at least three years overdue. It should be coupled—if it would have more than a diplomatic purpose—with large scale economic and financial assistance to China.

Indo-China Battle

INDO-CHINA is the southeasternmost peninsula of Asia's mainland, a French colony of great strategic importance and now the cockpit of a clash of imperialist ambitions in which the future of the Dutch East Indies, of China, and, perhaps, India is involved. From Haiphong, her main seaport, a railroad runs to Kunming, the important South China town. This was one of China's main supply routes until the Vichy government on June 17 barred the flow of war supplies. Back in March 1939, during the Prague crisis, France and Britain permitted Japan to occupy the Hainan island; it is from here that Japanese troops are now prepared to land, unless the colonial government concludes favorable economic relations with Japan and permits the Japanese occupation of airfields and military bases. Significance is this: first, China is threatened from the South; second, Japan would acquire



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a strategic jumping-off place against the Dutch East Indies; third, by cutting across Siam (which is friendly to Tokyo) the Mikado's troops could dominate the narrow strip of Burmese soil that ends in the Singapore naval base, thus bringing them to the Indian Ocean itself. American imperialism is so worried that, after conferences with both the British and Australian ambassadors, Cordell Hull last week again demanded the maintenance of the status quo. There is a possibility that the United States may even occupy Singapore with naval forces. Meanwhile China's foreign minister, Wang Ching-hui, announced that if the French governor acceded to Japan's demands, Chinese forces at the border would make the defense of Indo-China their own concern.

Appeasement in Mexico?

TRUST the New York *Herald Tribune* to give you the lowdown on counter-revolution. That Wall Street spokesman has turned into a propaganda medium for General Almazan, who is graciously accorded the run of this country from which to plot the overthrow of the Mexican republic. Referring to the fascist generalissimo as that "forceful and dynamic" Mexican, the *Tribune* saw in him someone who might remedy "the unsettlement which has followed the seizure of the foreign-owned oil companies." There's the rub.

Standard Oil has not forgotten or forgiven. It has bided its time and now, the imperialists figure, it can best put the screws on the Mexican government. The political wheel in Washington has turned and the State Department is not above using the threat, or the actual violence, of the Almazan forces to mulct the Mexican people of all their gains since the bourgeois-liberal revolution of 1910. So the Monterrey millionaire with international fascist connections, Nazi and British as well as American, is allowed to issue manifestoes in the name of his lawless, so-called "legitimate congress," is permitted to organize his gunrunning as he awaits the final go-ahead light from Washington.

Any honest observer in Mexico knows this: Camacho was legitimately chosen by the coalition of labor, the peasantry, and progressive middle class. He ran on a pledge to continue the generally progressive measures of the Cardenas regime. Nobody doubts that Almazan does have some following among certain backward elements; he won them by demagogically promising them the sky. He made use of dissatisfaction within the country, as every fascist demagogue does. But the majority of the Mexican people know he is not the solution to Mexico's ills any more than Calles was or Saturnino Cedillo. They know, too, that appeasement of Yankee imperialism (which nurtures the fascist uprising) can never win them security or peace. The big question today is: does President Cardenas himself realize that? He has given evidence of yielding to American imperialist pressure by his recent assertions, which drew fire from a strong supporter of his, Lombardo Toledano, leader of the CTM, Mexico's million-strong progressive trade-union federation. Will Cardenas recognize the danger before it overwhelms him and the Mexican people? The dangers of appeasement are amply recorded in the pages of contemporary history.

Golden Rule Days

IN New York "1,100,000 Crawl Back to School," said a headline of September 8 in the New York *World-Telegram*. In London schools children were cowering that day in air raid shelters, while on this side of the water much was made of America's non-belligerency by Dr. Harold G. Campbell, metropolitan school superintendent, who urged teachers and pupils to "give thanks for the blessings of peace." But the schools of America are rapidly going on a war basis. Vocational schools are being turned into preparatory institutions for military mechanics. Teachers were registering their disapproval of the draft and preparing to demand that municipalities make up the difference between army and school pay, in case they should be called up. In New York Mayor LaGuardia, pausing in his war duties, uttered a warning to foreign language teachers "not to get any propaganda in." Children were asked to report whether their parents were aliens or full-fledged Americans. Emphasis, it was said, would be on Americanism, patriotism, and "the national defense program."

The curtailment of New York's educational facilities which has resulted in overcrowded schoolrooms and undermanned staffs continues in 1940, following 1939's "economy" drive by legislators at the expense of the nation's educational system. And a cloud hovers over the New York educational horizon. The last legislature appropriated $30,000 to investigate the state's schools. In Albany the Rapp committee, without a single public hearing or the calling of a single witness, is preparing to place before the 1941 legislature a plan for a $12,000,000 cut in educational costs. In New York City the Coudert subcommittee has hired expensive lawyers to prepare the ground for "an investigation into subversive activities in schools." It is their plan to open public hearings after January 1, when the legislature is in session, and then to blast away with slander at progressives who are fighting against the limitation of services and curtailed building construction and for more and better education in democracy. The 1940-41 school year promises to be, throughout the country, a decisive period in the conflict between those who advocate academic freedom and those who seek to chain knowledge to the war chariot of controlled thought.

Roundup

THE WAR AT HOME: Without debate or a record vote the Senate okayed the House "defense" appropriation (for army) of $5,251,486,392, the top layer of FDR's preparedness cake of $15,000,000,000. . . . Food prices are 10 percent higher this year than last, reports the American Institute of Food Distribution; principal increase is in the price of meat. . . . Fifteen thousand New Yorkers massed in Union Square to protest the conscription bill. James W. Ford, Communist candidate for Vice President, was the chief speaker at the meeting, sponsored by the New York State Committee of the CP. . . . Finest distinction yet: "Labor hasn't yielded the right to strike—'it has merely abandoned the privilege of striking' "—from an interview with Sidney Hillman, Roosevelt's labor defense commissioner, as reported in *PM*, New York daily. . . . A strike of 250 workers on the Panama Canal locks resulted when the government refused to provide food of sufficient quantity and quality. Canal officials themselves testify that no "fifth-columnist" work is responsible for the strike.

LABOR FRONT: Supported by Labor's Non-Partisan League, Rep. Abe Murdock of Utah defeated Sen. William King three to one in the latter's campaign for reelection. The defeated candidate has been an opponent of progressive labor and social legislation, supported FDR's war stand; Murdock's pro-labor record includes a vote against the Smith amendments to the Wagner act and against the Allen bill to deport Harry Bridges. . . . Representing 250,000 workers, delegates to the annual convention of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America registered outspoken opposition to war and conscription, rejected candidates Roosevelt and Willkie, and urged their officers to work for the formation of a third party of "workers, farmers, youth, pensioners, the Negro people, and the unemployed." James B. Carey was reelected president. . . . The United Office and Professional Workers, at its Third Constitutional Convention, also condemned the war and conscription drives, the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates, relief retrenchment, profiteering, and the use of "national defense" to attack labor. Lewis Merrill, progressive ALP candidate for Congress from the 16th District, Brooklyn, was reelected president of the UOPWA.

FRANCE: *"Kinder, Kueche, Kirche"* is stressed in Nazified France as the press condemns "frivolous dress," exalts motherhood for the glory of the state. . . . A cable from President Cardenas to the United American Spanish Aid Committee of this country states that the Mexican legation in France has been instructed to take steps to protect, under the Mexican flag, German and Italian refugees who fought in the Spanish International Brigade and now face danger of being deported to Germany and Italy.

PLUM: Former Mayor James J. ("Tin Box Tammany") Walker emerges from forced eight-year retirement to become "impartial arbitrator" of the cloak and suit industry, at $20,000 a year. His thanks are due to that "anti-Tammany crusader," Mayor LaGuardia, and David Dubinsky, president of the ILGWU.

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Idle Talk

"Idle Money Idle Men" by Stuart Chase "offers patches and mending thread when they are stealing our pants," says Frank J. Wallace. The "popular" economist has everything but a solution.

IDLE MONEY IDLE MEN, *by Stuart Chase. Harcourt, Brace & Co. $2.*

"UNTIL enough of us," warns Mr. Chase, "begin to separate mental machinery from things under our noses, we shall continue to waste our energies tilting at verbal windmills." Under his nose, if he were to look, Stuart Chase would find the United States being armed for imperialist adventures, our whole economy swinging over to war preparations. He would see conscription and militarization being speeded to pave the way for war economy and dictatorship. He would have to face the fact that a sharp decline in its standard of living now threatens the American people.

The technique in writing a book like this is to take as your vantage point some place conveniently remote in space from which the more painful facts are invisible. Particularly is it important to surround the author's vision with blinders so that nothing else exists in the world except the set of facts with which he is concerned. Mr. Chase actually admits this, although innocently, when he informs us that a Marxist will not like his book.

Here is a "popular" economist. He knows that there are millions unemployed. He sees the figures of huge deposits in the banks. Says he, put the money to work by spending it; that will give men jobs. The trouble is "we" save too much of our money. The big corporations save so much in their depreciation and surplus accounts that they can buy new machines or build new plants without tapping the idle cash in the bank vaults.

But what are these "savings" that annoy Mr. Chase? They are the accumulation of profits which cannot be reinvested in further expansion of fixed capital at anything like the rate at which money was invested in, say, the nineteenth century. Why cannot these funds find profitable investments? Because the present productive capacity is already too large for the market to absorb the commodities our plants make. As it is, our productive forces are used at less than 50 percent of capacity. A machine of 1940 replacing a worn out mechanism of an earlier year turns out more goods faster and with less labor power. And the market for commodities actually has become more restricted as free competition was downed by monopoly, as free trade was strangled by imperialism. Furthermore, although Mr. Chase ignores this detail, the whole capitalist world is in crisis, and a war is spreading rapidly all over that world. A war for what? For the redivision of a lot of markets which have, each of them, also grown more restricted. That, in fact, makes it all the more imperative for the imperialists to resort to force to grab those markets.

And why is the market in the United States so shrunken? Why is the capacity to consume so much less? Because greater and greater profits are drained off by the owning few, making it less and less possible for the great majority to buy the things they need at high monopoly prices. In this very book Mr. Chase tells us that for many years 20 percent of the national income has been "saved" and that less than 10 percent of the population holds more than 87 percent of these "savings." There is no limit to our *ability* to consume. But there you have to face the facts and the directions of capitalism in its monopoly stage, and Mr. Chase does not do that. He believes government spending will stimulate plant expansion by increasing buying power and thus absorb the unemployed. That was a good idea, if a makeshift, in 1936. But this is 1940, and Chase's book was published just a few days ago. The government is spending money—for war. And if he has been reading the papers lately Mr. Chase will have noticed that in the midst of a gigantic production effort Britain's unemployment figure actually rose.

A recurring theme in the book is Mr. Chase's dark worry about our flattening population curve. The statisticians have it all figured out that at the present rate our population will begin to decline from about 1960 or 1980. The proportion of older people will increase. We'll become a nation of middle-aged folk. He doesn't see that this trend may be tied up with what he gently calls a "mature" economy. According to Chase, it was some "freak" which caused the great rise in world population in the nineteenth century,

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and it is "a massive trend in human fertility" which is responsible for the decline now predicted. I'll stick to my economics and let the biologists writhe at this explanation. Mr. Chase might investigate the connection between population trends in an expanding economy as against the lower birth rate in a society in which the cancer of monopoly has settled deep.

In the new Greenbelt housing development the birth rate is higher than that of the population of the country as a whole. Says Chase, "Mothers know that in such surrounding children have a chance." He might better have studied the birth rate in the Soviet Union. Then he would not have to resort to this abracadabra about "fertility trends" independent of the society in which he lives.

Comes now a solution to chase away the blues. "The reproduction index will move up again when children are wanted so badly that parents are at last ready to sink their prejudices and really safeguard the community against insecurity, unemployment, and war." Bravo! Semantics will triumph in the end. And what happens to that "massive fertility trend" theory if ideas can cure it?

What prejudices do the workers and farmers of the United States have to sink today to assure peace, security, and jobs? Chase doesn't mention any. Workers want the good things of life now. But to get them they will have to rid this land of the monopolists whom Chase quotes so approvingly. (He is another Stettinius fan.) They will have to learn that finance capital is heading them toward fascism and war, not, as Chase would have it, that the "savings" of the giant corporations are absorbing the functions of the bankers. Radicals, Chase announces gleefully, will now have to seek some symbol other than "Wall Street." Sorry, Mr. Chase, but there's life in the old octopus yet and we're not going to be fooled into looking at those nice rosy clouds while it strangles us.

All this leads to the program Mr. Chase has to offer. He wants a permanent PWA to offset the declining expenditures of private industry for plant expansion. He is for liberal old age pensions and higher income and inheritance taxes. (We quarrel sharply with his "broad" base for levying income taxes.) He urges a flexible WPA designed to expand when unemployment increases. He glows over the thought of a new bank for long-term capital loans at little or no interest to finance low-rent housing.

You see, Chase's heart is in the right place, but his eyes are closed. He offers us patches and mending thread when they are stealing our pants. Can we expect more? Chase sees no class struggle. He seems to know nothing of the surplus value which labor creates and which capital appropriates. He ignores the increasing cartelization of American industry, now to be intensified under war economy. He dodges the crisis in agriculture. And his treatment of currency problems is college course 6-B, "Money and Banking."

Against his proposals set the fact that the choice has already been made by big business; it has paved the road for us. If Stuart Chase honestly wants us to win the security and peace he advocates then he must drop his blinders, come down to earth, and join those who are fighting for those ends. As it is he has filled his pages with sterile facts, fantasy, flimsy theory, and he has desperately dodged the truth.

FRANK J. WALLACE.

Out of Date

HANDBOOK FOR YOUTH, *by Merle Colby. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. $2.50.*

THIS is blurbed as an "entirely practical book" which "expertly and concisely tells young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four how to make use of all available helps in solving their problems of health, education, vocational training, and jobs."

Apparently the only "available helps" the author could dig up are federal government agencies. Since the author limits himself to the agencies' own descriptions of their functions and performances, the material is uncritical and in many cases misleading. Aside from what Mr. Colby's intentions may have been, the net effect of his book is a hearty plug for the Roosevelt administration's aid to youth.

No one questions the value of that aid. But this book serves to obscure the source and the size of Roosevelt's contribution to the solution of youth's problems. The National Youth Administration, for instance, set up in 1935 by executive order of the President, was not simply a gift out of the fullness of FDR's heart. It was created by the pressure of the youth movement, united in the American Youth Congress. And what of its help to youth? The NYA set a fine precedent, but of 4,500,000 unemployed youth needing its aid, only one-tenth have been reached—and with the fat wage of $3.86 per week. One-tenth of the high school and but one-fiftieth of the college students needing a hand got it from the NYA program. Other weaknesses: it has no permanent status; aid is deducted from the family's total relief allowance; it is very undemocratically administered.

Take another federal youth agency, the CCC. Brass hats run it; they spend 50 cents per boy per year on education; wages of less than $1 a day go to the boy; useful vocational training is almost unheard of. And the same goes for most of the other government projects for youth.

A seventeen-year-old, out of high school and looking for vocational training leading to a definite job, would think from this book that FDR and his alphabet aides were sitting up nights making rosy plans for his future. Washington *is* abuzz with plans for him, but strawberries and cream aren't on the menu of forced labor camps.

The times have moved far beyond Colby's pages. We cannot linger today on what was true, with reservations, yesterday. Today big business itself sits on the President's Advisory

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Defense Commission and orders the conversion of the N[illegible] and CCC into auxiliaries of the war machine. It was "utopian," said FDR at the Youth Institute, to demand the passage of the American Youth Act. But funds far beyond what youth asked there are being found to pay for a new program which sets America's young people goose-stepping. It is not in anything like this handbook that the guide to the youth's livelihood and security is now to be found.

MILTON MELTZER.

Imitation Stolberg

LABOR'S CIVIL WAR, *by Herbert Harris. Alfred A. Knopf. New York. $2.50.*

HERBERT HARRIS is not a subtle propagandist for the social democratic faction in America. He has pretended to analyze the internecine war between the AFL and CIO. His book is sincere neither in conception nor in execution. *Labor's Civil War* narrates in a superficial manner the well known story of how many of the great industrial unions of the AFL broke away from the parent organization, undertook a national organizing campaign, and were, for their pains, tossed out of the federation. Harris brings the tale up to date through the formation of the CIO and into the present year of war hysteria and shifting political tendencies.

But the real purpose of the author becomes clear almost from the first page. He is out to wallop the CIO by rewriting and refurbishing with spurious political and economic arguments all the Red-baiting voiced by such notorious "friends of labor" as Matthew Woll, Benjamin Stolberg, and Martin Dies. According to Harris, Homer Martin's career as head of the United Automobile Workers was ruined by the dread "Stalinists" and not by Martin himself with his Ford and Lovestone contacts. Harris tosses mud deftly at the NLRB, assuming that Chairman J. W. Madden and board member Edwin S. Smith are pro-CIO and Dr. William M. Leiserson a pure-minded "referee," whereas secretary Nathan Witt is —psst—"said often to have imposed his own peculiar criteria [*sic*!], sympathy for the Communist Party line, as a job prerequisite." John L. Lewis also comes in for his share of Harris brickbats; his proposal for labor peace made in 1939 at the American Youth Congress is rejected as "slapstick" and Lewis is portrayed as a theatrical, easily influenced stooge. The Green clique in the AFL executive board is, in Harris' eyes, merely "sterile and inept and overanxious to be accepted as 'respectable.'" By turning facts upside down Harris makes it appear that Messrs. Green and Woll ache for labor peace, but cannot budge the imperturbable bushy-browed Lewis, who insists on playing ball with the wicked Reds.

The distortions in *Labor's Civil War* are so many and so flagrant that one can only wonder at the Harris ingenuousness. With easy and undocumented bravado this imitation Stolberg traces all the trouble in American labor squarely back to the Communist International, a feat which must make such open agents of big business as George Sokolsky rather greenish with envy. His picture of Soviet trade unions which "rise vertically from committee to council into the hands of Joseph Stalin" is typical of the Harris method of flat, unproved statement, easily refuted by any standard and non-partisan work on the subject, such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *Soviet Communism.*

Herbert Harris has one labor hero. Sidney Hillman is his man. And Harris' theory of labor unity is at one with the present Hillman method of restraining labor so that capital may squeeze the last penny out of the war drive. His book is not designed to promote labor unity; it seeks to widen the split in typical social democratic fashion.

SAMUEL BECKER.

Aviation

HOW TO GET INTO AVIATION, *by John B. Walker. Random House, $1.*

IT IS a safe bet that thousands of young men and women are going to plank down their dollars for Mr. Walker's book. He speaks with the authority of many years of experience on the ground and in the air, and is currently regional traffic manager for United Air Lines.

A review of his book, *How to Get into Aviation,* could really be condensed into two words: "You can't"; but Mr. Walker would certainly disagree. Consider, however, a few facts that he offers. Most young men want to get into the flying end of aviation; they want to be pilots. Granted even the vast expansion of our air services that the administration's war program will bring about, opportunities for flight instruction and eventual occupation in the field seem none too good. As of January 1 of this year there were listed with the Civil Aeronautics Authority some thirty-one thousand pilot certificates of competence. These include solo students, private pilots, limited commercial licenses, commercial and airline pilots. The first two groups cannot carry passengers for hire, so there is no money to be made there. The limited commercials may do so within a rigidly circumscribed area. The vast majority of our commercial pilots cannot find jobs that will guarantee them a regular decent living wage. And there were registered only 1,197 active airline pilot certificates.

The airline pilot is the aristocrat of his profession, receiving an annual wage (when employed) of between $2,400 and $12,000 a year, depending on length of service and whether he is a co-pilot or a captain. Two factors militate against the possibility of obtaining such a job: (1) the enormous investment (in time and money) required to obtain an airline rating; (2) the strictly limited number of jobs available. The minimum requirement set up by the airlines for employment as a pilot involves one thousand hours of solo-flying time. If the aspiring pilot has been fortunate enough to obtain

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The many other jobs Mr. Walker lists, ground and air personnel, dispatchers, radio men, stewards and stewardesses, mechanics on fields and in factories, technicians, ticket sellers, etc., are relatively easier to find; but the wide employment his book contends is imminent is naturally contingent upon an enormous expansion of the industry that is not yet apparent, despite the announced intention of the government to bring it about.

So the best way to get into aviation remains: to be a Christian "Aryan" of "excellent character" and moneyed background, and bend every effort to enter the military branches of American aviation.

ALVAH BESSIE.

Fictionized Biography

A MAN NAMED GRANT, *by Helen Todd. Houghton, Mifflin Co. $3.50.*

THIS fictionized biography of Grant is as shallow as it is long (594 pp.). The fiction element consists mainly in the creation of conversation between "Ulyss," as the author calls him throughout the book, and his family, fellow officers, or political acquaintances. One concludes that Grant never said anything worth repeating. There is special emphasis on tender domestic scenes which make painful reading because the Grant children talk so much like the Bobbsey Twins. We are also inducted into Grant's thoughts and feelings on any important occasions when he did not express them aloud. For example, we now know what he was thinking as he stood in a polling booth, marking his ballot for the 1868 elections, but we are apt not to care. He never comes alive, for all the intimate details which somehow reveal so little.

To understand the man we need to understand the period which produced him, and such understanding is almost totally lacking here. Although Jay Cooke, Jay Gould, and Jim Fisk are mentioned, there is no other indication that this was the age of the Robber Barons. Black Friday remains as incomprehensible to the reader as it evidently was to Grant. The explanation of the depression which engulfed the country at the beginning of Grant's second term reads like something Hoover might have said about 1929.

The first section of the book, which has to do with the battles of the Civil War, is more successful, in much the same way that a badly directed period picture is sometimes more interesting than an equally dull contemporary film. At least there are horses and costumes. The book has something else in common with certain Civil War films: its slanderous misrepresentation of the Negro people.

GALE THORNE.

Vast Abstractions

THE MAN COMING TOWARD YOU, *by Oscar Williams. Oxford University Press. $2.*

MR. WILLIAMS' *Man Coming toward You* is not the man you'd expect or especially hope for. Instead of a poet attempting to bring order and meaning into a chaotic world, we greet merely the chaos and go home again. The author sees and hears the same things we do: hunger, corruption, war, headlines, etc. But he sees them in huge blocks, devoid of any flesh-and-blood human being, so that the poems are simply a process of laying hollow bricks. We find only vast abstractions of man, myth, space, immensity, the everywhere, the all-around, etc.

This poet bends his energies toward the achievement of idea and feeling, not through a logical process of thought but through the unexpected conjunction of startling images. The method is valid. Unfortunately, in Mr. Williams' poems, one cannot help feeling a constant fakeness about the method, a sort of deliberate constructed place-finding for spectacular images.

Although there is no really satisfying poem in the book, occasionally a real lyrical cry rings out, something incredibly lost in the welter of pretensions. In "I remember the block party," there stands out:

> How the boys romped and all the dear girls sang,
> And flowers drowsed upon the hair and wind:
> Ah, musical were jargon and harangue
> And mandolins and candy of the mind!

Intellectually, Mr. Williams' understanding of the world amounts to this: "Man already has reached an airpocket in the legend of the mind. . . ."

Beware the poet who comes bearing vast abstractions.

RAPHAEL HAYES.

Sights & Sounds

"Foreign Correspondent"

Exciting war propaganda directed by The Great Hitchcock.

THIS film is the end-result of a long process. Walter Wanger paid several thousand good dollars for the rights to Vincent Sheean's *Personal History*, eventually ditched it. Subsequently there are alleged to have been at least three independent film stories written, thrown away. Finally, Charles Bennett, Joan Harrison, James Hilton, and Robert Benchley combined with the sometime great director Alfred Hitchcock to produce *Foreign Correspondent*. It opens with a sententious dedication to "those recording angels who stand among the dead and dying" (the

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,n correspondents) and ends with Joel ,rea standing in the BBC station, urging ,merica to ring itself with steel as the bombs drop on London and the soundtrack blasts forth "The Star-Spangled Banner."

In between there is everything but the kitchen sink. Much of what there is is indisputably exciting, for Hitchcock can direct. The literally smashing climax of the film comes when a transatlantic flying boat is shot down by Nazi anti-aircraft guns in mid-ocean. It's terrific. Effective use is made, early in the film, of the interior of an old Dutch windmill, where the newshawk, hot after an assassin of one of Europe's great, almost catches him. Here Hitchcock recreates the mood of danger and suspense he has so brilliantly shown us many times before. He makes wonderful use of inanimate objects, such as machinery, and innocuous sound effects, such as the creaking of the old mill and the whistling of the wind.

But not all the skillful technique of Mr. Hitchcock nor the Wanger bankroll can disguise the fact that *Foreign Correspondent* is just another in the series of pro-war, anti-democratic films. Today, when a people's peace movement is rising in America, Mr. Hitchcock does his bit for British imperialism by painting a picture of the British peace movement as a toy in the hands of a Nazi agent. Disregarding the patent fact that national betrayal has been accomplished in Europe by the real fifth columns of the upper classes, in governments and out, he points a warning finger in exactly the wrong direction. The men of Munich who brought about the sequence of events and the balance of military force which have resulted in today's London catastrophe have not been screened here; nor is there a hint of international treachery by international business men. Instead there is slander for the peaceloving people and a gross distortion of reality. And even real foreign correspondents will smirk at Wanger's idea of how they get their jobs and how they perform them.

There is one performance in the film, and it cannot be overpraised. That is the performance of Albert Basserman, German refugee actor, as the Dutch statesman, Van Meer. Mr. Basserman is a great actor and he steals the entire picture from the battery of stars: McCrea, Laraine Day, Benchley, Marshall, George Sanders, Eduardo Ciannelli, E. E. Clive.

"OUR TOWN"

Somehow or other we missed the film version of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* when it was in its first run. Now it is in the neighborhood theaters, and it will give you a pleasant hour and a half if you are not allergic to an overdose of sentimentalism. For Wilder had very little to say about smalltown life in New England in the stage version, and Sam Wood's direction of the film loses a good deal of what he *did* have to say.

On the stage the action was projected unrealistically, almost without props. It was curiously effective because what was there was delivered by a cast of very fine performers who had nothing to work with in the way of accessories but their own bodies. The trick photography that has been utilized in the film somehow destroys the illusion.

Martha Scott, who played in the original production, reveals in the film that her place is in Hollywood. She is an enormously talented young actress, with an almost painfully sensitive face and real passion in her. Frank Craven is less effective as the narrator here than he was on Broadway; something of his ingratiating presence was lost in the transfer to the celluloid. Fay Bainter and William Holden should be mentioned for sincere and intelligent performances as mother and son, Philip Wood for a moving bit as the drunken organist.

It is a curious thing how an intelligent writer like Wilder, who is able to catch the echo of homely speech, can for moments give you the semblance of human life and death, but none of its substance. The fabric of his story is very thin, no matter how much you may temporarily admire the warp and woof. It is simply the difference between a writer and an artist.

"FLOWING GOLD"

Julie, I mean John Garfield, is on the run again in Warner Bros.' adaptation of Rex Beach's action story of the oil fields, *Flowing Gold*. That boy can't seem to keep out of trouble. This time he has killed a company stooge in self-defense and is on the lam. As tough a nut as ever came out of the Bronx, or is it Brooklyn, John works slinging pipe, earns the friendship of heart-of-gold Pat O'Brien, and wins the heart of his Group Theater colleague, Frances Farmer.

Fanny looks wonderful in riding pants; she even looks wonderful when she falls, first belly-first, then the reverse, into a mud puddle. I'd say that in this picture Miss Farmer has turned in about as good a job as she has ever done on celluloid. For somehow she cannot make the most of her great beauty and her indisputable talent on the screen. You feel that at any moment she is about to yell, "For Pete's sake, take that damned camera away!"

This is frankly an action picture, and there is a good deal of interest in the spectacular business of watching men grub for oil, watching the derricks at work, the oil blow-off, the inevitable fire and explosion. The Law catches up with our hardboiled friend Garfield, but he has Miss Farmer for moral support. He's been typed so many times now, and he's learned so many Hollywood tricks (and unlearned so much that he learned with the Group) that he'd better watch out or he's likely to turn into a Charles Bickford.

For Hollywood, all oil promotors are swell guys whose workers just love them (and get rich when the oil comes in).

But I say, see this one for the derricks. They're terrific.

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SWING AND SWAY, The ALP Way. New Theatre League Show, Newspaper Guild, 117 West 46 Street, SATURDAY night, September 14, 8:30 P.M. Admission 50c.

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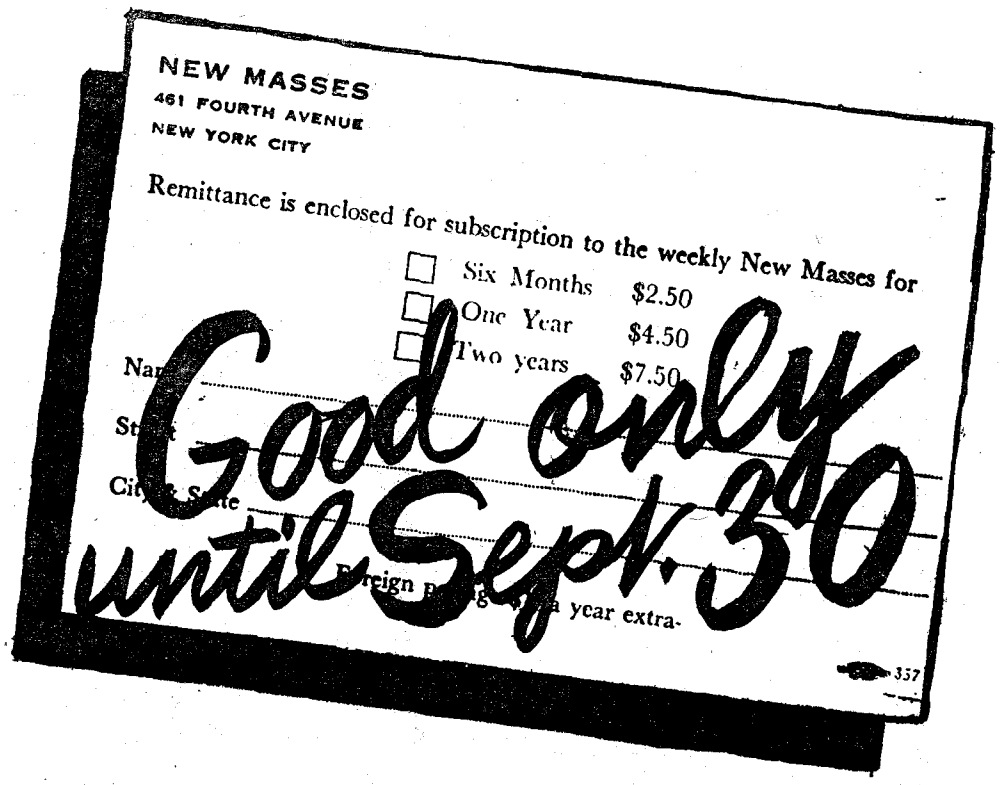

IT WASN'T fair to NEW MASSES readers on vacation. So many them wanted to take advanta of our offer of a book and a year's subscription at the old rate that we have extended the date of change to September 30. We refer to the change we announced last month, that the sub rate to NEW MASSES is being increased as follows: Annual subscription—from $4.50 to $5 per year; semi-annual subscription—from $2.50 to $2.75 per year. We have already announced the reasons. The increase is made necessary by the effects of the war on publishing conditions. Paper prices have shot up steeply. We explained how for ten months NEW MASSES has absorbed such operating expenses and still tried to keep within its budget for the year—a budget which our readers helped us sustain by their splendid response to our annual financial campaign last winter and spring. But we cannot, as we explained, do so any longer without stretching to an impossible point the meager margins on which we work.

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